

花木もみじ
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Arian Rose
アリアンローズ

しまったよつです
転生して
乙女ゲー
世界の
3

ヤンデレ系

**リコリス、
記憶喪失に!?**

全編完全
書き下ろし!

魔法書の世界に囚われ、記憶を失ってしまったリコリスは、
無事ヴォルフのもとに帰れるのか……!?

ヴォルフとのラブも増量! ヤンデレ系乙女ゲー・ラブミステリー第三巻!

It Seems Like I Got Reincarnated Into The World of a Yandere Otome Game

-Yandere-kei Otomege no Sekai ni Tensei Shite Shimatta Youdesu-

**- Volume 3 -
School Arc**

**-Author-
Hanaki Momiji**

**-Artist-
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[Forgetful Dreamer]



ウィオラ・アトレイド

学園内でも指折りの美人で、リコリスの友人。リコリスさえ舌を巻くほどの読書家で、美術などにも造詣が深い。



アルタード・ブルグマンシア

子どもっぽい我儘でリコリスを振り回す、困った後輩。彼が持ち込んだ魔法書『青い箱庭』が事件を呼ぶことに……？ 愛称はアルト。



リリアム・パレー

稀有な魔法の才能を持つ「ヤンデレ系乙女ゲー」世界のゲームヒロイン。紆余曲折の末、リコリスの友人に。愛称はリリィ。



ノヴァ

正体不明の少年。達観した大人のような一面と、無邪気で世間知らずな子供のような一面とを併せ持つ。



黒公爵

魔法書『青い箱庭』の登場人物。お姫様をさらい、自らの城に閉じ込めた張本人。



お姫様

魔法書『青い箱庭』の登場人物。国の太陽と称されるほどに美しい。黒公爵の城で囚われの身となっている。



ヴォルフガング・アイゼンフォート

リコリスの婚約者。真面目な性格で、人に甘えることが苦手。リコリスには深い愛情と執着を抱いており、常に彼女が最優先。愛称はヴォルフ。



リコリス・ラジータ

リーリア公爵の一人娘。現代日本から「ヤンデレ系乙女ゲー」世界に転生した。見た目こそ大人びているが、好奇心旺盛で世話好きな性格。



シェイド・ラジータ

リコリスの義理の弟。自他共に認めるシスコン。華やかな美形の上、社交的な性格なので女子に人気がある。

Chapter 1

The waiting room for the imperial matches, which doubles as the welcome party for the new students, was brimming with excitement.

Particularly for the students aspiring to be knights, who were now rejoicing at the results of their matches.

Nonetheless, maybe the reason the tension in the air feels somewhat weak was because, at the end of the day, it was for the sake of a school function. Or, since the champion and the runner-up champion was almost decided, it could be that taking it easy was the manifestation of the sentiment.

“Wolf. Shade.”

Calling out to the two who were in an area far back, my fiance was the first to look over his shoulder.

“Lycoris”

Those purple eyes smiled gently.

Having remarkably matured in these last few years, not only had Wolf’s body structure become taller, he became tougher as a whole, even when compared to the muscular students gathered in this place, his difference from the rest was striking.

Since I had to look up at him when talking even though I was fairly tall for a girl, I understood the value of the time we’d first met, when I could look down just a little at him.

Though he had quite well-organized features, ever since growing up, people often talked about a sharp, discerning image when talking about him. Since Wolf’s almond pupils had an impressively vivid color, with his hair and even his clothes centered around black, I believe, owing to that, a misunderstanding of some sort occurred. Because matters where he omitted his facial expressions when appearing in public and the like were many, his handsome face ended up giving a sagacious impression to

others.

“Elder sister. Even at a place like this, are you planning to give your encouragement by slapping this cute little brother of yours on the butt?”

Pleasantly and light-heartedly smiling while saying uncute things, this little brother through mysterious circumstances, nowadays really resembled Father in my opinion. Rather than saying it was his features, it was more of his behavior that resembled him. Well, even though it wasn't his real father, since they had a blood relation, it wasn't really that strange though.

Nevertheless, speaking about this smiling face. This was the sort of expression which, when I squint slightly at it, could probably pass exactly for my father's. (Father was a bit baby-faced)

Though the hair color that settled in could no longer be branded as gold as compared to when he was a child, part of his quirky hair, when exposed to light, still sparkled and glimmered. Coupled with the whiteness of his skin as the center of a glamorous impression and his deep reddish-brown eyes being of a prominent dark color, he was hugely popular with charming young ladies who had commented, “I end up wanting to take a look”, or “it's mysteriously dreamy, for some reason”.

Although when standing next to Wolf, he had a sense of slenderness, Shade also winded up having a solidly-built, manly physique. That is to say, he wasn't cute.

“Since I probably can't watch the outcome of the game, I thought to give my support right now”

Because my seat was in a conspicuous location, I'd probably be exposed anyway, so I came here to tell them in advance.

“Did something happen?”

Since Wolf immediately let out a concerned voice, I shook my head in denial.

“I just wanted to check something for a bit. I'm already used to seeing Wolf's and Shade's bouts, so in that time, I'll finish the errand”

“Despite trying to raise the men's morale for their battle, your words seem to douse

cold water. Elder sister”

““Because of that, since I was caught off guard, I couldn’t participate in the finals at all”, if you used such an excuse, you’ll be laughed at, you know. Shade”

Having fiercely and deliberately scowled at him, Shade faked an exaggerated expression of fright.

“I’m sorry, Wolf. In the box seat, I really wanted to watch you beat Shade in the overall championship, but...”

“You all treat me harshly”, though Shade wedged in that remark, it was ignored.

It’s not like a section of the female graduates threw a fit at the end because they didn’t want to part with Shade at the previous year-end; the riots which lasted until just before the start of the school term didn’t necessarily mean they were angry about it. Yeah, not at all.

“I’m okay with it. But, are you sure there aren’t any problems?”

“Yeah. I’ll go see how the underclassmen are doing, that’s all”

“But, your face... isn’t it a bit pale?”

“...yeah. As expected, I grew tired of sitting at that seat. It’s way too close to the direction of the royals, you know. Since the leaders of the school were with them, they weren’t concerned with doing things such as starting a conversation with me, but somehow, I ended up strangely tensed”

When I conveyed the excuse I had prepared without hesitation, Wolf, at last, nodded his head consenting.

“They’re really not horrible people”

“But, that’s how you think because you’ve been going in and out of the royal palace since you were a child... ah geez, there’s not really much time left, I’ll be going then”

“Alright. Give me a shout if something happens”

With our exchange, Shade started poking fun.

“Ah- ah- you know, this is what I mean. I think Sir Knight’s side of being a worrywart has long since become abnormal, don’t you agree? In the midst of the matches that have the tight security of the attending royals, are you actually saying that something could happen?”

As Shade picked a quarrel, Wolf gave a wry smile. Shade sometimes intentionally calls Wolf a [knight] to make fun of him.

“Well then, my dark Lord Knight. Make sure to smite my evil little brother down, okay? And Shade, just be careful so that you don’t have any injuries. If even a cut grazed your face, the other person will be resented by your devotees, you know”

I deliberately cracked a joke, then left the room.

Like that, the battle commenced. The battle card of the last friendly match, was quite reasonably decided to be the favorite to win, Wolf, vs the rival candidate, Shade. ⁽¹⁾

In that circumstance, I quietly stood up from my seat.

...although I said “quietly”, en route, “where will you be heading?” and “just a bit more, and the most important match will begin” were dropped while I profusely troubled everyone about.

“It’s a shame, but because I was asked for help by the teacher, I have to leave my seat for a bit. If it’s alright with you, please tell me how the match goes afterwards”, having informed them with a face showing admirable disposition, the ladies gave a look of great sympathy and with the caring words of “I understand “ and “thanks for your hard work”, they sent me off.

The ladies, which were my peers and juniors, were fundamentally raised to be quite mild-mannered. Distrusting a person’s words was something they didn’t do... Their future is a little worrying. Though it would be good if they could be blessed with an honest spouse.

During the time I was moving, I winded up attracting a bit of attention, however, once Wolf and Shade came into sight, the spectators’ gazes narrowed to one point in the stadium.

Moving while avoiding the public eyes, I came closer to the freshmen's seats.

The whistling sound announcing the start of the match, echoed high in the blue sky.

And then, almost at the same time, Shade fired magic as a distraction. This very aspect of materializing flower petals was a playfulness so like Shade. Unfazed, Wolf subsequently showed how to magnificently cancel Shade's attack.

Although the match started with them messing around a little, the offense and defense after that were almost like scattering fireworks.

As Wolf ventured forward, he moved at lightning speed. Shade leapt backwards in order to evade. Wolf did not run after him. In the next moment, Shade broke into his opponent's side and came advancing. Once again, Wolf elegantly warded him off, gaining distance.

Whereas Shade dished out countless troublesome attacks, Wolf moved at critical moments. If it dragged on, Wolf would likely be declared the winner in the match's development, but if one lost his focus even for a moment, either one could lose all the same.

Sometimes, there was a visiting silence while the pair glared at each other – a moment of equilibrium.

The audience watched with bated breaths.

Among them, was a young lady with hair of gold.

She watched the battle with her vivid emerald green eyes sparkling.

Flushing with excitement, her cheeks were rose-colored. Her small lips pink.

Although she wore a comparatively modest dress with a white and sky-blue theme, there was no way to conceal her loveliness.

This was no doubt, the game's opening. It was a spectacle taken from that scene.

Chapter 2

Besides when we're in our dormitories and when I'm taking classes for girls, I spend a lot of my time with Wolf.

I see Shade frequently talking with other people regardless of gender, (his male to female ratio of company was 1:9), but when he notices us, he'll approach before I know it.

Today, for the sake of [work], the three of us planned to assemble one by one later.

When I say work, it's actually about the duties related to our dormitory positions. From the sixth years in their final year, both male and female dormitories have a single dorm prefect head – shortened to 'dorm head' – each. From the fifth years, two people each are chosen as prefects. Further down, the number of associate prefects aren't clearly defined. With the dorm heads and the dorm prefects consulting together, the nomination of a number of people deemed essential was possible. As a custom, generally around ten or so people take up those jobs.

Well in short, with the adolescent children who easily cause problems one way or another assembling within the dormitory, dividing the students into sections and making them an autonomous management was the intention of the school.

In fact, even though I say dorm head, usually, no work is imposed on that person. At best, once in a while, that person does things for the teachers; occasionally, that person would give a sermon paramount to saying "in order to not act shamefully as students of this glorious royal magical academy" for an event.

If I had to say, it's the prefects who serve as the dorm heads' helpers that were hectic. Because, since I also served that role last year, I knew that as a fact.

Today was a few tasks of the dorm heads — this day, to give a sermon of example at the opening assembly, Wolf and I were scheduled to go up the platform.

"Shade, don't you have something you need to do?"

Shade was also appointed as a dorm prefect this year.

“Thing is, the other prefect is incredibly diligent”

“Is that why you’ve pushed all the work to that person?”

“The performance is much better like this than when it’s the two of us. That person... and I, something like attaining cooperation is probably impossible”

I glanced at Wolf with my eyes, however, it looks like he doesn’t have any desire to interrupt the conversation on Shade’s way of speaking. Wolf is pretty laissez-faire about his subordinates. Maybe the way men interact with their superiors and subordinates is just different.

Shade and the other prefect, to tell you the truth, don’t get along exceptionally well. Although it wasn’t to the extent that it was put out in the open, I have yet to see them make cordial conversation.

I’d love to say ‘Then don’t put the two of them together then.’ but it’s the school that elects the dorm prefects. Let’s just overlook the fact that parentage is a major factor on who they elect.

“Yesterday I ran around doing the lion’s share of the work, so for today at least, it should be fine to leave it to him”

Apparently, the two male prefects divide their work up instead of cooperating.

The freshmen’s dormitory registration started from a week ago and roughly ended yesterday. In that week, the degree of various pressing issues had been hectic enough to faint, but from today onwards, with the start of class work, a little of the burden was supposed to decrease. Once the semester begins, which homeroom teachers are taking care of which students become clearly defined, and so the dorm leader and dorm prefects can just push all the wo--entrust the students to their respective teachers.

The sound of light footsteps drifted in. Even if it was considered a little improper, I wanted to give them leeway today. After all, the girls are busy.

The two female dorm prefects; in other words, the two who were being forced to be

my gofers, ran hurriedly towards me.

“Onee-sama, we’ve finished checking the students roster! “

“Although we’ve already gone to see the new students, at present, there isn’t any child complaining to be in bad shape. We’ve told them to stay quiet while you and Wolfgang-sama are talking!”

Don’t misunderstand.

Them calling me Onee-sama isn’t because of *Maria Watches Over Us*. It’s because of a tradition within the female dormitory.

Naturally, it isn’t imposed or anything, and the girls who are too embarrassed to do it just call me Lycoris-senpai. But there are also plenty of girls who are happy to play along.

Back while I was a prefect as well, a number of my underclassmen girls called me “Onee-sama”, so over the last year I got used to this ‘shame play’. ⁽¹⁾ These days I can return their greeting without so much as a stiff smile.

“ (*Although I want them to quietly listen to the school chairman’s talk as well,*) thank you. This one week was really hectic, but once this ceremony is finished, there will be time to relax, won’t there? Good work. You’ve been doing very well”

The two wore lovely, shy smiles, looking happy as they bowed their head; for some reason or another, I moved my body in order to conceal that from Shade’s eyes.

Either one of these two was meant to become the next year’s dormitory head, but I’m thinking there wouldn’t be a problem even if I left it to them right now. The two were both extraordinarily diligent – they were girls who spared no effort.

However, these girls don’t usually come near me too much.

Even now, I’d only just said it since they had finished their report to me, but with a position a little far away, the two settled down and had ended up starting their own pleasant conversation.

Although I don’t want to admit it.

In this school, I'm relatively alone.

It didn't mean I was bullied. It's not like they ignore me when I'm talking, and when we make any kind of group during class and I ask "can I join?", I don't get rejected.

However, I don't have any friends that I'm constantly, on a routine basis, together with. To me, this had a big reason.

Five years ago. When I entered into this academy, I met a female student called Solana Brugmansia. ⁽²⁾ Brugmansia was one of the five duke families, and she had been the dorm head in those days.

I'd already known the other person's name for some time now, but it looked like it was also the same in her case.

Having personally been called out by her, that was all it took to whirl me up. Rich pink-blond and soft brown pupils, the lady-like her who was already elegant with every move she made, looked like a princess to me.

It was my first time having an older-sister figure, but once I tried talking to her, I realized she was a little absent-minded – how do I put it, she was the sort of person you simply couldn't leave alone.

And so, under her patronage, I began adapting quite smoothly into dormitory life. Especially with the start of the school term, even more than the magic lessons, a lot of etiquette lessons on the school grade's hierarchical structure (The underclassman watched to learn the ways of her senior. The senior noticing her underclassman's gaze, occasionally, offers guidance) was also attained, as a lot of the time was spent together with her.

With the combination of both genders, it was set that Wolf would join me in the magical study-classroom lectures which was a lesson for the other grade in school.

And so, after a short time passed, when I had time to look over my surroundings belatedly, I had a realization.

Groups that got along well had already been formed!!

I ended up missing out on it.

If this was all thus far, I still had the option to enter one of the existing groups. I discussed the considerations with Solana-sempai, the Onee-sama, that for the time being, I was going to try to fit in with the children in the same year – don't take it the wrong way – and thus changing my lifestyle of clinging to her.

However.

She... was extensively indulgent. She went around to help behind the scenes, giving out instructions [You're going to invite Lycoris-chan for lunch] and [You're going to invite her into the group work] to all the girls in the same year.

And as expected, of course, I noticed as well. I mean, they invited me to lunch on rotation after all.

When I realized it, I wanted to dig a hole and bury myself. Even if I thought about it now, honestly speaking, I should be glad they didn't start to bully me instead.

And afterwards, well – after giving my spirit a good pounding, I had them stop that bothersome rotation and planned on improving our relationship bit by bit, but, the results were lacking. I don't think Lycoris had actual friends in the game either, so perhaps this is already what you'd call destiny.

By sense of self-examination and restraint, I treated Solana-sempai as a [senior] all throughout; but, I spent the two years visiting when there were invitations sent out by her.

Continuing after Solana-sempai, who served as the dormitory head, graduated, I had also served as a quasi-prefect and dormitory prefect as we went up the grades. That being the case, through the involvement of work, the chances of speaking with children of the same year also increased, gradually, the distance seemed to shorten. Although that were so, I was in a standstill since by no means could this also be called an affable relationship. Personally, I'm going through busy days because of a particular troublesome junior.

By the way, in Wolf's case, actual friends came in better than in my case. Or perhaps I should say, he was sort of a little bit surrounded? Once in a while, it would become a conversation where he'd point out "Aren't those what you'd call a conversation

between a boss and his subordinates?”, but the situation looked like companions joking around and making fun of each other. How enviable.

Among the three of us, it was Shade who was remarkably sociable. Although it looked like girls were fundamentally the only ones he talked to, I’ve also seen him talk to guys about stupid things. Well – it didn’t necessarily mean I knew what the contents of the conversations were, but, it sort of had the atmosphere of being stupid. It was definitely a conversation of the sort that ends up quickly stopping once a female student approached.

By the way, that Solana-sempai, just before graduating from school, left an inconceivable bomb.

It was a timed bomb, a bit later, it exploded, greatly surprising me.
This was what she said before leaving school.

[By next year, my brother will be coming here to enter the academy. Since my youngest brother is far apart in age, with everyone in the household doting on him, he ended up developing a little bit of a selfish personality... I’m worried. Lycoris, if you could, take care of my brother, okay?]

And so, on the preceding year’s entrance ceremony.
Came his arrival. Yellow’s, that is.

No, pardon me. The arrival was that of Arutad Brugmansia.⁽³⁾

One of the capturable characters of the [actual game] - the image character Yellow was a simple-minded idiot-class of yandere.

For him, rather than [imbecile], [idiot] is more appropriate in my opinion.⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ Este says it kinda means sexual play...

⁽²⁾ Solana Brugmansia. Solana was a name taken from Solanaceae.

⁽³⁾ Arutad Brugmansia. It’s another poisonous flower. Flip the name of Arutad, and you get Datura. I feel so smart now... though the spelling is Arutad, the pronunciation is “Arutado”.

⁽⁴⁾ She’s trying to weaken the term stupid saying that oh well he’s not an imbecile(insult to a worse degree), just an idiot.(lower level of insult).

Chapter 3

Arutad Brugmansia was a glamorous handsome blonde youth. With huge, light brown doe-like eyes, he was a lump of charm. His feelings show up on his face immediately.

His nickname was Art. Though the game users appointed the nickname [Bakalt]. [Baka] + [Art] + [Cult], with that, it was [Bakalt].⁽¹⁾

Why 'cult' was in it, was because inside the game, Art's entourage would just follow his directions no matter how silly or inhumane of an act it was. [Do they do it even with logic?] [No, these were already fanatics, and you should probably call it as it is], thus, it seemed this nickname marked an end to that debate.

[Art] was extraordinarily hedonistic, he didn't have sufficient self-control. Although, he was remarked as an idiot, strangely enough, he also had a clever side. To say the least, excelling at manipulating people was worrying.

Inside the game, whether it was planning for a party, dressing someone up, dressing fashionably himself, or even supporting love, he would do it for the fun of it. Gambling, taking drugs, bullying, and killing small animals were also the same things to him.

The first time I met him, I recalled him from inside the game and thought, [it's over]. In front of such a fearsome opponent, there was nothing else I could do.

The unique thing about Art, among all the capturable characters, was that a serious past wasn't even alluded to. Even in that area, he was said to be an idiot type as well. In fact, both his parents are in good health and it seems not even a rift was there, the youngest child of the six siblings held a somehow heartwarming setting. Well, he might have turned weird from being spoiled too much at present, though.

At any rate, there wasn't even a trauma he had to overcome. If this was about his self-restraint, it could be a matter of how he could be endowed with it. Like embedding a microchip into his brain.

Fortunately, though, I honestly don't know whether to say if it was good or not.

Art was a boy who was terribly picky with people. Since I'm the daughter of a duke, he listens to the things that I, his senior, says well enough.

But, even though I say he listens, it was to the extent where he'd feel inclined to return a response like "eh~~" or "don't wanna" to my scoldings. Though not quite satisfactory, since the notion called the hierarchical system got into his head, I was treated as the boss.

I put it upon myself. Without fail, I decided that this crafty, tyrannical child had to be domestica- educated.

That was meant as a joke.

At least, for Art, it was certain he thought people who held more authority than him had to restrain him some way or another. There was the matter of Solana-sempai's request for help and, fortunately for me, a dependable fiance and a little brother was there too.

Solana-sempai = the effort from Art's home. After a long journey returning home, it looks like she surrounded Art and persuaded him. Telling him, "if you listen to what Lycoris-chan says, you won't go wrong. If there's anything worrying you, go consult it with her"

No, that was pretty troublesome though, sempai.

Leaving the child's education to the school's hands, much less, to a single student's, was a practice I'd really like to end.

It was that very Art, who rushed over after seeing us from a distance, coming into view.

Taking his entourage along with him in droves.

And then, speaking to me.

"Long time no see~ Lady Boss. Were you lonely without me?"

“.....”

Bak... Art uses the nickname “Boss” even with Wolf. In his head, dorm leader = boss, it seemed. Incidentally, he referred to Shade as [Sempai].

“...haven’t I asked you repeatedly to stop with that way of calling?”

“Why not? It’s spot on, isn’t it?”

“If you keep something like that up until you reach the high society of the royal court, I’ll have to use everything I can to drive you to stop, won’t I...?”

My grudge was muffled out by a somewhat frightened Art, “It’s not like I meant anything bad by it. Right guys?”, he said, talking to his entourage behind him. Moreover, the simultaneously nodding entourage was a lot of five people today. The breakdown of which was two guys and three girls.

Art’s entourage, which sometimes increases, decreases, or swaps people, fundamentally didn’t approach us to talk. They’d only meet our gaze and lower their head. ‘Was there even some kind of agreement going around here?’, which at first I doubted, but it seems there *was* an agreement. I don’t even get it.

Only one person amongst the members talks to us when necessary – a boy. As Art’s male cousin, he was almost regularly at Art’s side. You could probably call him a watchdog, but I don’t believe he was actually carrying out that role. He simply watches after all.

“In the first place, why did you come here, Art?”

“Eh?”

“You’re only a fourth year, you’re not a dorm prefect yet. Go stand in the students’ line!”

“I’m a quasi-prefect, you know!”

“I know, but... we’re fine without the quasi-prefects coming here today”

“Don’t wanna! I wanna be here too!”

“I can’t give just you special treatment you know...”

“Why?”

See here.

I was seized by exhaustion.

He didn’t understand the reason why he’s not being given special treatment.

He didn’t know why we’re ending a fun thing like this.

At such a time, Art faced us and asked [Why?]. The difference with those words compared to when a small child was asking because he wanted to know, was that there was irritation involved. [Up till now I’ve been excused for everything I did, so why won’t you guys excuse me?] was the sort of irritation he had though.

Every time I heard this, I pondered. For three years, I’ve watched him from relatively up close. But I honestly couldn’t understand him even a little bit, could I? The belief that we’d become a little friendly as we talked – wasn’t that nothing more than just my delusion? I mean, as proof of that, didn’t he just go as far as to question my reasonable words with a [why]?

I was still stumped on how to reply, when Wolf and Shade drove the sulky Art off, sending him back to his seat. The group following him from behind was, as always, completely silent.

I heaved out a sigh.

And right then, I noticed the faint scent of drifting agarwood.

“Pardon the delay”

Politely saying it in that fashion and lowering his head in a beautiful gesture was Ru Xiang.⁽²⁾ The owner of this agarwood scent.

Matching his movements, his straight, glossy black hair swayed. His unique hairstyle, which was cut in a way so as to put layers at the side of his face, suited him quite well. Just by him being there, it was like a one-of-a-kind world had been created. His white clothes of slightly unusual construct was delicately embroidered with a silver thread. A young boy with an exotic air around him.

Well, it's troubling whether the term "young boy" that I ended up saying was enough. Wolf and Shade were already clearly endowed with physiques of young boys, in spite of this and in comparison, Ru Xiang was slender. Though, with a tall, slim figure and a perpetual serene smile, it was evident that he was transitioning from a young boy to a young man.

After Ru Xiang reported the students' situation to Wolf, he very quietly entered into our circle.

He was another one of the dormitory prefects. And, another one of the game's capturable characters as well.

His birthplace was unclear even within the school. A person of particular noble character had been the only explanation provided.

Inside the game, there was a scene where [Ru Xiang] talked about his mother. Saying, she was a degenerate. An extreme woman. A person who concealed all her wants. A person who had been referred to as decline and destruction.

He had a strong complex towards women. He considered loving their womanhood, not just about sexual desire, but even as far as simple attachments, as vile. Having a partiality towards inorganic substances which didn't have desires, when he became troubled with a fondness towards the heroine, immediately, he went as far as to consider killing her while she was still beautiful. However, with all his might, he never acted on it.

He had been the only character inside the game who truly didn't give off a violent aura. The sick part of him – the quick aggressiveness – never did materialize. The only time his route turned bizarre, was when he made a remark to the heroine saying [the things that you like, I want it gone]. Even with that, since his route was gentle even for a story, no matter what choices were picked, the heroine does not get killed nor does anyone

else die for that matter. At least, none as far as I remember.

The Ru Xiang in front of me right now was an earnest student.

Enthusiastic to learn, well-mannered, and a firm protector of the law. Even though there were times his earnest side clashes with Shade when they don't meet a compromise, there wasn't a situation wherein he held a grudge against me, whom was that guy's older sister.

Even now, he lightheartedly called me "Lycoris-sempai".

But then.

I probably shouldn't be off guard.

The heroine — [Lily] had appeared in school, which means, the time of the game had begun.

⁽¹⁾ BAKA + ARUTO + KARUTO = BAKARUTO.

I thought of something to westernize it: Dolt + Alto + Cult = Dault. But let's stick to Japanese so I don't go off.

⁽²⁾ Ru Xiang(瑞香) : his name is taken from the flower of Daphne.

Chapter 4

Since all the members were present, we headed to the auditorium where we'd be conducting the assembly.

When we went in through the door, the noisy students swiftly turned silent. Though I could feel the burden of the gaze of attention from all sides well enough, I was accustomed to it.

It's not important but...

I wonder why I always imagine what it would be like if I did something silly in this atmosphere. For example, If I let out a strange cry, or if I seemingly fell down on purpose, I wonder what would happen.

It's not as if I want to die socially, but I don't want to be coldly looked at by the whole school either.

Ah, of course, I'd never once acted on it.

To begin with, since I was walking hand in hand with Wolf, even if I fall down, I have the feeling I'd only be held in his arms.

The magical academy insists on gender being impartial as the scholastic front, but at the same time, it was also a place where the nobilities' female children were taught lessons on manners. That's why, it's only natural that the female students were escorted.

Incidentally, dancing lessons were a combination of men and women.

Rather than embarrassing, I'd say that it was something I'd pretty much gotten used to.

Regardless of whether it was done by habit, in that [situation], for me, it was Wolf's trait of walking half a step behind me that was, if anything, awkwardly embarrassing.

A good wife? Is Wolf a good *wife*?

Well, I know this was a part of his overprotectiveness though!



While thinking of that trivial matter, we arrived on the platform.

The assembly proceeded smoothly.

Given that Wolf had practically told them everything regarding [knowledge as part of being a royal magical academy student] prior to this, I faced the students of the same year as me, saying “spend the remaining one year of school life treasuring it so as not to regret it”, and to the lower year students, saying “the times you can enjoy school life will be over in just a blink of an eye. Work hard everyday and see through what you must do” and delivered the greeting without problems.

And then, when my face ultimately looked up, my eyes drew to the rear column of students.

She was there.

[Lily].

I think it was good that it happened after I finished my speech.

Even though I knew in my head that she was at this school, every time I saw her, I’d end up shaken. Although I returned to the stage seat wearing a nonchalant face, my mind was not far from her.

The game heroine appearing in the school meant that the game has started.

That, in some sense, meant the tragedy was starting. If I had to give an example, it’s the same thing as a detective appearing at his designated scene in a mystery novel.

The characters of the game will end up falling sickly in love with her. ⁽¹⁾

Of course, they had the makings for it, or perhaps I should say, it was because they

were somewhat unstable to begin with. But, for sure, by falling in love, the negative emotions such as jealousy, possessiveness, and anxiety swelled and burst. If I put it in another way, by loving the heroine too much, they ended up becoming strange.

However, at the same time, her existence also offered a saving grace.

In the game, divergences existed. In other words, by selecting good options, the story would struggle on to reach a happy ending. As for the darkness in their hearts, the heroine had a wonderful development to clear it. The people around them also didn't die. The heroine didn't die either. With even the hero not dying, this became a happy ending for all three assembled.

I needed to make sure of the situation. At least, I need only to avoid the trap of the abnormally wide variety of bad endings. I can't afford to have anyone die on me.

I had to make sure of what I must do *so as not to regret it*. Strangely, these were the words I had said earlier.

What was about to happen depended on the heroine's choices. But, be that as it may, even *I* can't stand and watch without doing something.

I wonder what kind of future she'll aim for. I wonder who she'll love.

What if that person was Wolf?

I wonder what I'd do. Would I fight her? Would it be *okay* to fight her?

Would I have it in me to say that *that* route would lead to a path towards happiness?

Honestly, that likelihood might possibly be the very thing I fear the most.

Chapter 5

Although it wasn't strange since we were in the same school, I instantly met her face-to-face.

Since lessons on manners were carried out by combining all the school year levels, she and I came to be in the same class. Even in the game, this had been so.

Since there had been no alterations in the previous year, I could recognize the members coming from the second year until the sixth year simply by sight. Continuing after the freshmen, it was Lily who began her self-introduction.

"I'm Liliun Valley. Please – kindly take care of me" ⁽¹⁾

Her gesture of bowing was even clumsier than the first year students'. The fact that she was a commoner was well-known by almost everyone in the entire school.

Her voice, which I'd heard for the first time, fit the impression a little when matched with her charming appearance. Even while her greeting was clumsy, it was easy to follow; I somehow managed to breathe again.

The subject of the first day's etiquette lessons was determined by the newcomers' greeting etiquette.

Although already well beyond the years and having a tensely-strained back, the etiquette teacher would speak gently when talking about greetings in regards to manners. Things such as not to carelessly talk when other people are giving their introduction, and, after giving a reminder on the very basic parts concerning things like the introduction's procedures, it was brought to a close with the most important point – to constantly bear in mind not to allow ourselves to have unpleasant thoughts towards other people.

Even though there are also people who put out students' every single move as hopeless among the etiquette teachers, this teacher's lessons were popular with the

students for being somewhat gentle. Of course, there might be some significance to those strict coachings, but, for me to also think [I want to be a woman like that] meant I was holding this teacher's methods in high esteem.

"The accumulation of day-to-day effort gives birth to beautiful actions. Observe your upperclassmen's ways closely and use them as reference, okay? Especially since Miss Dormitory Head is also in this class"

And so, I ended up feeling the pressure when I considered those kind words.

Of course, since I can't disregard it, while chanting in my mind [don't rush it, do it slowly], I picked up the hem of my dress and with a "I'll work hard to meet your expectations", I gave my thanks.

What happened after what was, so to speak, a [mock introduction] and [mock greeting].

I believe another purpose for this was to ease the new students' nervousness, and it seemed to be successful with that. Every girl seemed to be having fun – with this slightly embarrassing game of pretend, they were enjoying themselves.

The girls don't know. Although this teacher was a person who never loses that Buddha-like smile, this person's own expectations for us just continues to become higher and higher. I will never forget about being made to do pseudo-weight training everyday for [the sake of beautiful actions]. Ah, no, I respect this person. Really.

It wasn't limited to this person, but, for the etiquette teacher, she can't help but think of pumping blood through means that were fundamentally athletic-oriented.

With the likes of what was called my pensiveness concluding at an appropriate point, I tried to participate in the lessons as well.

It was a little around that time.

At a short distance away from where I and the teacher were, several people raised their voices in laughter.

In this lesson, we were to greet our fellow companions as we were setting up the common desks with a "Nice to meet you".

That was certainly a spectacle that would invite laughter. In fact, I did hear some who couldn't hold back their giggles.

But at that time, somehow or other, the laughter seemed to have been coloured with contempt for someone. I ended up concealing my unintentional frown after hearing such a laugh. For that reason, my feet directed me there.

At the destination I walked to, was a golden-haired young girl — Lily, who was looking troubled with her head hanging down.

“You are terribly unused to bowing, aren't you. How strange”

The person that had said this was in the same year as Lily, one of the fifth year students. Talking as if remembering a funny joke, it wasn't clear whether or not she held ill will towards the person herself.

But for the girls in the same group who'd ended up bursting out laughing once more so as to follow her lead, this was definitely a composition of bullying.

Before the laughter spread around, I thought I had to stop it.

“If”, I began a little louder than usual.

“...if, being inexperienced is something to be laughed about, then I suppose every one of us will surely be mocked in high society after this, won't we?”

Saying this, I dropped my gaze, with my head slightly lowered.

Though the words I spoke were unmistakably my true feelings, when I made eye contact with the girl that spoke, my gaze was capable of forcing out an apology. Even without that, I wanted to believe that she'd come to understand.

Since, so long as there wasn't any special reason, the magical academy students were to exit into high society after the school graduation, holding unease towards the unknown had to be the same for everyone.

“U-uhm... I... I-I'm sorry!”

Fortunately, starting with her, the girls who had laughed at Lily competed frantically in order to begin apologizing. With a flash of relief, I smiled at those girls; they even sent an apology in my direction. They weren't bad girls at heart.

With the intention of appearing nonchalant as I glanced at Lily's situation, which had been on my mind, eyes of fresh verdure met mine.

What a marvel it was, the look on her face was fascinating.

If I don't include Wolf or Shade, it was fair to say that I almost never receive such a sincere glance from another person. It was probably because of that.

"Come now, everyone, don't forget that we're in the middle of our lessons"

With the teacher's calm, though resolute voice, the classroom's atmosphere returned back to normal. However, the following words, no matter how soothing to the heart it seemed, couldn't stop the blow.

"Oh, that's right. Perhaps it would be a good idea for Miss Lilium to be instructed by Miss Dormitory Head for a while?"

The teacher smiled broadly in such a way as if struck with a good idea.

That sort of development wasn't even in the game though!?

⁽¹⁾ Her name comes from Lily of the Valley.

Chapter 6

As expected, Lily was an existence that noticeably stood out inside the school.

Not even a day had passed after our lessons in manners, and I'd gotten to hear that name of hers once more.

By evening of that day, the school was already brimming with rumours about her.

[I heard she broke the magic measuring instrument, I've never heard of it happening before]

There were those that felt agitated, and those that felt skeptical. Given that sentiments were varied, it seems that interest was not short on tales about Lily learned through hearsay.

Sometimes, the students in the same year, acting as eye-witnesses on that matter, add in new information about her. It was almost like that of a Chinese Whisper game, where the details were twisted, fragmented, or blown out of proportion.

[If those were true, it'd be terrible, wouldn't it?]

When I heard that muttered, I frowned.
Therein lies the problem.

The magic in this world was not caused by beseeching a miracle through existences like a spirit or a god. It's from an invisible power circulating inside the user's own body.

It wasn't an almighty power that could do everything – the way this power manifested was greatly dependent on its suitability to each individual.

For example, Shade displayed strong suitability for magic that acted on the mind when he started with fascination magic.

Wolf, himself, was good at body-strengthening and offense-type magic. Since his

career aspiration was to succeed his father, Duke Ranuncula, if this materialized, it would give birth to a combat-fanatic prime minister.

As for me, if I were to classify broadly, I'd be in the same mind manipulation category as Shade. But, my absolute forte in magic was strengthening my own memory. In other words, it wasn't anything scary, it was only magic used for the likes of memorizing for an exam. Although it was certainly convenient, it was also certainly plain.

At any rate, though each person's magic varied greatly, there was one common feature. That was, that [one won't have magic strong enough to exceed the expectations of the Association].

The Association was, by nature, a group that conducted magical research, even now, that was still a strong part of it. Within its long history, having contributed to organizing a great variety of magic, I heard they were able to roughly understand the boundaries of magic itself.

For instance, in regards to Shade's fascination magic. Since it was magic that manipulated the mind, the danger scale was on A-class. However, there were also researches conducted on how to go against it.

In contrast, Lily had abilities which surpassed the Association's assumptions. That is, her existence that exceeded common sense, [reaching a point beyond what can be done with magic].

A rare exception. It wasn't an exaggeration even if I were to say that her very existence merits an S-class on the danger scale.

In fact, while the students were talking about Lily's magical ability, the underclassmen had the tendency to mock it. As for the upperclassmen, they might have, at any rate, reached an understanding on what this meant – that is, about her dangerousness.

In addition to this, I'm worried about how she'd take to these students' reactions. If they jeered at her, would she think them haughty? If she thought worse of it, I wonder whether she'd even hurt someone?

To tell you the truth, I have no idea what goes on inside her head.

In the game, [Lily] was a young girl that concealed her magical talents since magic was

unthinkable for her origins as a commoner.

In the magical school, where the members had not changed since entering the school at age twelve, the girl, who was incorporated midway as a special case, caused great ripples to this school's fixed routine.

Although she had a strong personality given among other things, her origin and her ability score, [Lily] was the player's own creation. I don't know what words she'll utter.

Her personality, which can be glimpsed from among the choices, ends up greatly fluctuating when selecting any of those choices. 'Which one is her true nature?' or 'Are any of these even her true nature?'

I started to think of wanting to know her – about the Lilium Valley who came to this school.

Long after dinner, I continued thinking about this matter.

I was in the dorm's library, spending my free time alone.

This place was a relatively good spot that not a lot of people knew of. Students generally head to the library if they needed to find a book. Since the library furnished in the female dormitory had a limited collection of books, it was fair to say that almost no one comes to use it.

If they'd wanted to make this place just a little bit livelier for instance, they could have been partial to books for entertainment. Sadly, these books were just the ones that only adults would want students to read, they weren't books that students would want to proactively read. Revised editions of books on history and literature comprised the majority of it. Since books related to magic were tightly regulated, there weren't any here.

The room was the type that if you walked ten steps more, you'd have circled around it. Given that there were only two chairs set aside, it wasn't even suited for friends to clamour into. Since it is a place for a forever alone book lover to rest her mind, I come here often.

There have been times when other students would occasionally visit, but, for some unknown reason, everyone who did, left in a panic. Not only that, they'd apologize to

me saying they were [sorry for being a disturbance]. Even though I, the person who remained in the room and the one they said this to, didn't tell them anything of that sort, could they not act so frightened?

Since it was sad to think that the dormitory head was occupying this room, I guess they've held back from coming to this place.

And so, as I heaved out a sigh, my ears caught the reverberating sound of a knock. Had they already known someone was using it since the lights were turned on?

"Yes, come in"

I remained inside, even though I was thinking that they might run away once they realized it was me, I urged them to come in. Somehow, it was Lily who came inside.

Although I was extremely surprised, I realized that I was alone with her in this place. Right now, the female dormitory was brimming with rumours about her, and I fear that this could lead to special attacks in her room by groups stirred up by curiosity.

This might not be the time for me to be carefree in this sort of place. I've got to have a counter-plan as the dorm head.

"...I'll be leaving soon, so please feel free to use this place. If you'd like to borrow a book, then you'll need to fill out necessary information at the bottom of the note--"

"No, uhm"

She said, interrupting my words.

"I... I was looking for you, Lycoris-sempai. There's something I wanted to talk to you about"

What... did she say...

She knew I was here and wasn't running away, better yet, she came all the way over here to look for me...?

"Is now a good time?"

“...yes. So long as it’s before I retire to bed”

Once I said it, she went closer to my side, smiling happily.

Even though I once again thought of it, she really was a cute girl. Although her features were also adorable, the carefree feeling truly left a good impression. This feeling seems loved particularly by the older ones.

Offering her the chair, she merely said “thank you very much” unabashedly and immediately sat right next to me.

“What I wanted to talk to you about is regarding what happened during our etiquette lessons, uhm, you did me a favor by helping me then, honestly, thank you very much!”

She swiftly and vigorously bowed her head down.

“No, it’s no big deal”

“But, I don’t have even the slightest idea about etiquette, I’m a total weirdo. And yet, Senpai, you still cheerfully agreed to be my mentor” ⁽¹⁾

Well, I did get very upset about doing that though.

Leaving that aside, her words made me slightly uneasy.

“Do you really think yourself a total weirdo? Or perhaps, did someone say this to you?”

Really, [Weirdo] was a considerably nasty word.

Seeing Lily sink into silence, could it perhaps be the latter? Inside the game, Lily had a considerably hard time getting used to the new school. This was natural. After all, she was abruptly thrown into a society whose living standards were different from hers.

“I’ll be honored to give you guidance on etiquette, but I hope you won’t forget the most valuable thing”

“The most valuable thing?”

“You’ve also heard it from the teacher, right? The most important thing is the thought

put into the action. For instance, you came today to especially express your gratitude to me. What you did was most important, it had sincerity, so don't shrink too much, it's alright to be confident"

Although this were words spoken by the teacher, it seemed she was honestly affected by it. Even with the countless 'thank you very much', I was told the words repeatedly enough to be flustered.

Then, when I was about to leave, she said this.

"Uhm, is it alright to come here again?"

"Eh? Yes. As long as it's a dormitory student, anyone can come here..."

"That's not it. What I mean is, if I come here, can I talk to you again?"

I ended up nodding my head too many times with excitement.

Without doubting my suspicious behaviour, she smiled happily and left the room.

T-this...!!

Did we... end up becoming friends!?

(Is this alright!? Is it really alright that we promised to meet again so easily!? Is it okay to take her words to mean that she wants to talk to me!? Am I right in thinking that she likes me!? As expected of the heroine! What a nice, friendly girl! I think if we talk more, we might become even closer! W-we might even become best friends or something!)

My heart gushed with joy.

I can't stop myself from looking forward to the next time we'll meet again.

Somehow, it's as if I was the one captured by Lily.

Just kidding.

(1) She says 'sempai' instead of 'you'.

Chapter 7

Since that day, I went back and forth to the library. It's fine to think me a forever alone with a lot of free time on her hands. It's a sacrifice I have to make.

The best news was that Lily came to the library the next day and the day after that for me, and we talked about a lot of things there.

At the beginning, it was mainly about campus life and lessons.

It seemed that Lily really did have a considerably tough time, she said she couldn't keep up with the subject matter in class in particular.

That's natural. On top of not having any foundation before now, since she was made to skip over four years, making her try to understand the lessons of a fifth year student was a mistake.

"Since the teachers have come to think that there is no way I can follow what they're talking about, they don't even call my name or ask me questions during class"

Lily said this with mixed feelings.

It'd also be troubling if she were given advanced questions, but to be completely neglected was probably not fun. She's pretty strong-willed despite how she looks.

"That... makes you want to change their opinions of you, huh?"

"Yes"

That's a good answer. Although I also personally like students who have the will, even as the dorm head, the other party should be worthy of help.

"For history, if it's alright with you, I can teach it to you. If you grasp the huge course of events until you reach the current lessons, it should be fine even if we set aside the memorization of the trivial details. For language class, I think there's no other way but to earnestly read books, though... ah, no, first, we need to make the choices, right?"

Since it's difficult to hasten all the courses in parallel, we should focus on the subjects you're interested in..."

While talking, I considered the things I ought to do myself after this.

First, was a means that could be used more effectively during a subject's class period. Things like only listening during a perplexing class would be a waste of time, and it could even chip off her will to learn. Since I can't do anything about this on my own, I guess I have no other choice but to discuss it with the teachers.

At any rate, not being able to spare time during the day for Lily's sake was tantalizing.

So that she doesn't make the same mistake I did, I mustn't make it known to others that I'm too concerned about it, otherwise, she'll be kept at a distance from friends.

For that reason, we can't make the bold move of visiting each other's rooms in the dorm (it'd be impossible to do this without the other students seeing).

Still, sneakily having clandestine meetings was fun in its own way.

It was fun to map out various learning programmes too.

Even the idle chats we had together in our spare time was fun.

Though I said idle chats, since I didn't know what kind of topic would catch her interest, for the time being, I tried talking about Wolf or Shade – her [capturable targets]. Since they had caught her interest based on her reaction during the game, and because those two come up often in topics even in the female dormitory, I thought it was an easy starting point.

But, even though she seemed to be enjoying herself listening to what I said, she didn't show any particular interest in them. I don't know whether to be relieved or disappointed.

The most impressive thing, from what Lily told me, was what she said about her dreams.

Wanting to ensure that children won't have their freedom unjustly restricted even if the child endowed with magical powers comes from the masses like her, seems to be

her dream. For that reason, she wanted to enter the association.

It was a fine dream and, if such children who were currently suffering damage because of that existed, it was a problem that could not be ignored.

Even though I left that aside, I had a devil of a time thinking about the question this subject raised.

One of which was about her past. When she said [have their freedom unjustly restricted], I thought, 'could she be talking about her own personal experience?'. In fact, when talking about her past, she doesn't talk much about her family in particular.

There was no mother at home. She doesn't like her father too much. That... was everything she said about her family.

When I asked whether I could call her Lily, she said this while slightly at a loss for words.

"Thank you very much... in my introduction at class, I did say [my nickname is Lily]. But, honestly, no one calls me by that name anymore. In the past, Mother used to call me this, though"

As she said it, she gripped the pendant on her breast. Perhaps for her, it was a memento of her mother.

Please don't show me such a tearful-looking face. Otherwise, I'll tear up as well.

By the way, after this, I cheekily got her to call me [Lycoris], with a promise to do so when nobody was around.

Regarding the things I was made to consider from Lily's conversation, there was another one, this was about my own future.

Was... there likely a time that I seriously thought about my future? Although I ought to be embarrassed as someone who was at her final year in school, I dare say, there wasn't.

Vaguely, there were times that I thought, 'Surely, it'll likely turn out like this' or something. However, from there, I didn't have a dream or anything I've made my mind

to do.

Before arriving in this school, the future was a matter of when I'd enter the school.

Before Lily arrived, the future was a matter of when the timeframe of the game would start.

After that? What I wanted to do? What kind of life I wanted to live? I should think about them.

Another day, and again there was a terribly thrilling event.

A little bird, who had a nest in a forest at the outskirts of the school, paid Lily a visit. At that moment, the words that filled my head were like this.

W-what is this, it's so heroine-like!!

"Oh. For you to come as far as this place to find me, you sure are tenacious. Lycoris, I'll introduce you. This little one is a child that accompanies me during lunch"

Saying that, Lily opened the library's window, a single lapis lazuli-colored little bird flew in. After the little bird circled the room, it settled on Lily's shoulders.

"This little one seems terribly accustomed to people. If you give him breadcrumbs just once, henceforth, he'd continuously come back with demands at lunch time"

It seems she's been eating a sandwich or whatever else for lunch outside. I suppose it was a given that I didn't see her in the cafeteria at lunch time. I eat lunch inside the school building, and was also generally together with Wolf or Shade.

However.

A golden-haired young girl in a blue dress eating lunch under the bright rays of sunshine. A lapis lazuli-colored little bird swooping down on her shoulder with a flutter and flapping of wings.

I-it's so heroine-like.

Although she feels more like a heroine from the World Masterpiece Theatre rather

than a heroine from an otome game, at any rate, it is a scene that ranks high in my internal [Heroine behavior ranking].⁽¹⁾

With great excitement, I looked at the little bird, but, it ended up flying away to avoid me. That was just typical. Sorry for getting carried away.

Just like that, time passed by in a blink of an eye.

Every single day was enjoyable for me, I felt fulfilled.

On such a day, I had a realization as I was having a discussion in preparation of the dance lessons, which was on the day after tomorrow, with Lily. It was the first after the school term started, in other words, it was the first joint gender dance class for her. Lily was fretting over whether she might end up making a mistake in that place.

Huh? And so, I felt a deja vu of some kind.

Don't tell me, could this be... Wolf and Lily's encounter event?

Chapter 8

The fifth and sixth year joint dance lesson, even while designated as a [lesson], was actually closer to an event.

A written invitation is delivered in the name of the school head prior to opening the exhibition, and even on the day when the exhibition opens, we'd have free time after dinner.

The location was a small hall at the [guest house].

The [guest house] was the name used among the student population, this building's official name was the Culture and Arts Building of the Royal Magical Academy. Why the students used a name that wasn't even remotely close to the original name, was because its image of a lodging facility for outside guests was strong.

In fact, the facilities that were contained in this building were an archive that collected rare books related to magic, a large hall for theatrical companies from the royal capital who were invited to do public performances twice a year, a small hall used for dance lessons and such, guest rooms for visitors' use, and so on.

By the way, inside the school, this building is a very popular test of courage spot, especially for male students.

If spoken well of, it gives off a feeling that there's a history behind it. If spoken ill of, that ancient building tickled students' hearts.

And, above all, [an archive that collects rare books related to magic]. This was it.

Not only was it terribly suspicious, it was a room that aroused all sorts of imagination. All the more, since students fundamentally do not enter the rooms.

For that reason, rumours that stimulate students' curiosity and fear regarding this building do not die out.

They say several students that have done the test of courage in the past have gone

missing. It looks like the howlings of a terrifying monster have been heard inside the building – no, wrong, the thing they heard was the sobbing voice of a child. It seems like there's a mummy in the guest hall's archive. What are you saying, the mummy is in the innermost room of the basement. I hear the mummy is the mummy of a demon king!

As might be expected of a magical school, even the seven wonders (to be precise, there wasn't seven though) was abundantly preposterous in variety. What's that about a 'mummy of a demon king'? That idea of a demon king turned mummy was fantastic.

By the way, in the surrounding countries', much less our own country's history, the times a [demon king] or the like having made an appearance in the past was — zero. Its existence appeared only in stories.

Moreover, the mummy in the archive they're talking about is probably the misunderstanding they made of the man that had been employed for over sixty years, Mr. Hemlock the librarian, who'd turned eighty last year.

The misunderstanding was about his appearance. When talking about an eighty-year-old grandfather, anyone would end up thinking of a wrinkled old man, but in reality, they'd only see him as a forty- or fifty-year-old man in the prime of his life, at most. There were these occasionally exceptionally strong people with magic, the type of people who looked considerably younger than their real age. Even his mind was young. If I were to say how young his mind was, it was young enough that he'd woo me, a person who visited the library for the teachers' errands. Well, even though I say 'woo', he'd only invite me to tea in a gentlemanly fashion. There, the lip service was probably a mere association of it, though.

I strayed off-topic.

What was important was the joint dance lesson.

Consequently, it was about the love events together with the capturable characters that was to happen with the game heroine, Lily.

That afternoon, when I tried asking Lily in detail, I came to know how low Lily's encounter event consumption rate was.

At the moment, it looked to me that as far as Lily was concerned, the first person she

would have a lot of contact with was Shade. While this was my own brother, it was expected.

Since they also take a lot of the same lessons in the same school year, I learned they'd quickly come to be in greeting terms with each other.

Since even the game's encounter event for [Shade] and [Lily] was an event where, having an interest in Lily, Shade had come talk to talk to her, it's probably fair to say this was cleared.

But, when I tried asking her if they get along well, Lily's answer was:

[No. Not particularly]

She returned this with a blank look on her face. He talks with the other female students in the same way, nothing more to it, was the explanation.

Next, also of the same year as her, was Ru Xiang. In regards to him:

[Every time I see him during lessons, I think, 'what a beautiful person']

To start with, from what she tells me, she has never personally talked to him. This had a slightly inevitable reason, Ru Xiang basically never moves alone.

The young man named Oria, gangly and too insipid for some kind of [guard], follows him around often.

This young man named Oria, was a point that I had on my mind. Actually, this young man was nowhere to be seen in the game. For instance, even though the names for Art's male cousin, along with the boy's entourage and the like were never disclosed, they still made an appearance inside the game. And yet, the existence of the young man, the only one acting as Ru Xiang's guard, that was not in the game, was in here. I believe this was a slightly strange topic, though...

Well, my memories related to the game were also sketchy, and I couldn't remember well without a trigger, but, to begin with, the time in the game and the current one differed in many ways.

At any rate, the times where Ru Xiang is all on his own were limited to things like when he was in class or doing the tasks of a dormitory prefect. This meant the [good old

shoujo-manga-esque bump in the corridor] encounter event for [Ru Xiang] and [Lily] was unlikely to happen.

After that was the lower year, Art. In regards to him:
[I'm not familiar with the person]

I-is that so?

Of course, she knows his name from conversing with me, though. And so, somehow, I ended up fussing over Lily.

But, well, isn't it fine that she doesn't particularly get to meet Art? After all, speaking of the encounter event for [Art] and [Lily], the dreadful impression was bad. I'm not sure whether [Art], who took along his entourage as always, was poking his nose into [Lily] who had an unusual history, or came to challenge her. Caused by a lacking imagination, it was an event where he decided 'common people = poor' and hooted at her.

These days, even elementary students wouldn't take such a lousy approach.

Well then, if that's the case, this means that Lily's favored choice will inevitably end up becoming Wolf.

Well, to begin with, it didn't mean there was a firm promise that Lily had to choose from among those four people, though. No, but, I hated the thought that Lily and Wolf might end up liking each other. Frankly, I wanted to give a warning to the two as soon as possible. Since I am Wolf's fiancée, wouldn't I have that right to do so? But, while nothing has happened, just how hasty would placing constraints be? Or rather, isn't this no longer at the level of being called jealous? But once something does happen, it would be too late...

(But, the [Wolf] in the game and Wolf, my fiancée, are not the same. Wolf is an earnest person, he wouldn't abandon me, his fiancée, without warning)

Only when I thought of it that way did I somehow regain my calm, I'll just end up feeling sad thinking of things like [Wolf] and [Lily] 's love events in the game.

The [Lycoris] in the game was honestly a third-wheel. When I was also playing, I often thought "I really hate her".

(It's kind of depressing...)

All of a sudden, I ended up in thought.

I like Wolf. Although a word like [love] is exaggerated a lot, at any rate, I thought, 'isn't it that I have fallen in love with Wolf?'. It's difficult for me to lose him.

Even if I was suddenly told to cancel the engagement, I wouldn't consent to it. Giving my blessings to the pair's happiness was something I simply couldn't do.

Since I was already heading towards the same madness as the game's [Lycoris], could this have been arranged as a step forward?

Does the fact that I fell in love with Wolf mean I was heading towards a path of destruction?

That supposition makes my heart contract.

The time of the dance lesson came.

The dresses, in hues of each individual's own liking, drew a picture of the waltz.

In the commonly deserted hall of the guest house, at the moment, were riots of blooming flowers that were doing nothing but dancing and smiling.

Of course, the male students were also present in shirts donned in unfamiliar ties, and wearing shoes unsullied by mud.

Since the leisurely triple meter dance was basic, almost no one among the fifth and sixth years found it difficult. At any rate, those who were weak at picking up the rhythm, and even those who were weak at moving their bodies, became in some way or the other, unexpectedly good when they enthusiastically practiced just this much. Everyone's faces were shining with festivity.

Lily, who was wearing a new dress of emerald green which matched the color of her eyes, took her partner's hand with a slight nervousness on her face. It was the first time she'd gotten a written invitation, and having nothing but this humble dress, she had on a strained smile; however, not only was the color of the dress's bright and

gentle impression matched well enough to say it was meant for her, her footwork was pretty good too.

Her dance partner was Wolf. Since his reflexes were quite used to it, under the teachers' instructions, he often linked arms and practiced with girls in the lower year who were not very good at dancing. Dancing with men who were skilled at taking the lead was the best way for beginners that had no confidence in themselves to improve. It was something that I, who'd been dancing with Wolf since before coming to this school, knew very well.

Speaking of which, I was present in my ever unchanging evening wear rouge dress. When I had danced a series of dances with false cheer, I then quickly grew tired and exited from the dance floor. After speaking with the teacher for a while, I gazed at the dance floor. And so, right now, that meant I had been gazing absent-mindedly at Wolf and Lily's dance.

(A cute couple with a height difference...)

Even though I thought 'stop thinking about it, stop thinking about it', I ended up thinking about self-torturing thoughts.

Once the song was over, everyone retired from the floor. After Wolf and Lily exchanged a few words, only Wolf walked in my direction.

I waited for him to come closer while being somewhat nervous.

The very first thing that Wolf, who had a somewhat serious expression, said was this.

"Lycoris, I have something I want to ask you about"

With a sombre expression, I lost my mental battle.

'What is he going to say?', I wondered, my heart pounding.

"Today's dance partner – that is – whatever made you pick one out?"

"??"

Not understanding what I was just asked about, I tilted my head.

Today's dance partner? Is he talking about Lily? Ah, no. Wolf was asking about me. My dance partner today? I wonder, who was it again?

"Sorry, Wolf. At any rate, I guess I was in the mood that I wanted to move my body today... Was there someone I was dancing badly with? "

"Oh, I see, is that what it was?"

Since Wolf smiled with a cute face that I couldn't easily bear to look at, I, who was somehow worrying myself, felt like an idiot.

After all, just now, Wolf got jealous at my dance partner. Usually, when I'm directed by the teacher, there wasn't anyone else I danced with aside from Wolf and Shade.

"Hey, Wolf. This is a serious question I'm about to ask, so I want you to also answer me seriously"

Wolf nodded with a serious face.

"Wolf, do you believe in fate?"

This time, it was Wolf's turn to have a question mark floating on his head.

"Perhaps I should say fated partner – for instance, someone who, if you love, will make you happy, like it was decided from the start... no, I have to say it more simply, right? For instance, as a person fated for you, although that person is strong and positive, that person somehow has a fragile side... how should I put it, a person you feel that you can't leave alone"

At that point, Wolf, who seemed to finally understand, nodded.

"...that would be you, wouldn't it?"

Chapter 9

(Shade's POV)

"I really want to know who's the person that made you make that kind of face"

My words made her gaze back with a startled look.

Prior to this, she had glanced towards my elder sister and the person who I fear will be my future brother-in-law, flirting with each other. Placing the standard distance from there, were the onlookers, who were watching them, while blushing for some reason; but, I dare say, they were probably a Lycoris or a Wolf fan. Those two had whimsical devotees that thought things like [I want to watch over the pair's romance].

I really want them to stop it. In various meanings of the word.

"May I invite you for a dance?"

Even though I invited her with my best smile, the girl– Lilium's answer was blunt.

"The purpose of your invitation isn't for a dance. It's to have a talk with me, isn't it?"

She's a smart girl.

"Could the talk be about staying away from your elder sister"

"No way. I don't have the right to say such a thing"

"But, the reason why she doesn't have any special friends even though she's been yearning for them for so long, is because you have been an obstruction, is it not?"

She's not only smart, she seems to be fairly strong-willed too.

"That's a misunderstanding. Neither I nor Wolf had ever considered a thing like wanting to keep Lycoris a loner, you know?"

“But, if she had your cooperation, she should’ve found it easy to cultivate an understanding with those around her”

“Well, it’s... like, you know. It’s not as if I proactively made her a loner or anything, but still...”

I dipped my voice a little lower.

“If that person ends up spending all her time on other people, wouldn’t it be lonely?”

Is she going to ridicule, or reprimand?

But, Liliu’s reaction was neither one of the two.

“I can also understand that kind of sentiment”

(Oh?)

Maybe it was because I showed her my true intentions, Liliu’s expression became a little calmer. Even so, it was only to the extent that I turned from a [threat] to just another [stranger].

“You can understand why we’re jealous. Then, what kind of sentiment would be difficult for *you* to understand?”

“.....”

I decided to try to get one step closer to her thoughts.

“For instance, familial affection, perhaps, or maybe friendship?”

“It seems you know a great deal about my past, don’t you?”

Without flying out into a rage, she showed a provocative smile. It was a smile I’m sure was an expression that was the opposite of an [*it was supposed to be impossible for you to find out*] expression.

The knowledge I acquired about Liliu Valley’s childhood, was that since she possessed power [inappropriate to her life], perhaps with that, her relationship with

other people, which was supposed to be depicted as decently peaceful, collapsed.

Her abilities came to light in the form of an accidental discharge of power. From what I learned about the state of affairs at that time, it seemed every one of them had said that it was something short of a miracle that no one turned up dead.

And then, her mother, not able to bear the terror of her daughter's power, left the house. Her relatives, terrified of being connected to her, cut off ties with her. Her friends, regardless of knowing her innermost thoughts, whether it was out of fear or jealousy, all distanced themselves from her.

Her father, in particular, was the worst. That man took great pains to determine whether Lilium had any value. Without ever handing her over to the care of the association, it seemed he kept her confined for who knows how long while he went looking around for a person who would buy his own daughter for the highest sum.

"If you know about my past, then I guess you're uneasy having a person like me by her side, right?"

"Well, to be honest, I am worried. That's because I can't read your intentions"

She was aiming to get into a career in the association right after graduation. Since her will and her intention, which was wanting to monitor strong magic holders at the association, were consistent, that was an almost decided fact.

For people entering into the association, I wonder if there was some significance in having the status of being a friend of Lycoris, the duke's daughter. Of course, it wasn't like being a friend of an influential person can be disadvantageous, though.

"Though you say intentions, I never thought of such a grand thing... certainly, it still hasn't been long since she and I met. But, I'm completely fascinated by her. Even though it looks like she's surrounded by a lot of people, she seems alone, one way or the other. Although those girls around her love to look at her from a small distance away, despite that, it looks as though Lycoris doesn't realize this and it only makes her feel lonely"

"Do you like lonely people?"

When I asked this jokingly, she sent back an exceptionally serious look.

“Yes, that’s right. If you were to ask me, flickering between things like kindness or affection is easy. I like people who take the trouble to seek me. I like people who yearn for something earnestly”

I couldn’t laugh at her.

“...but, she isn’t really alone in the truest meaning, right? After all, you’re here, and he’s around too “

Lilium sent back another glance towards Lycoris and her companion, those fresh verdure eyes narrowed with what looked to be sadness.

“If it’s a command, I’ll place some distance from her. But I don’t want to hurt her so I won’t ignore her, just enough so all of you won’t feel uneasy”

Staring at me with eyes that radiated some kind of tragic determination, I felt kind of bad. Whether I say something or I don’t, I’ll feel troubled, so eventually, my mouth opened.

I really am soft on women.

“That person — Lycoris, is someone that makes you sort of believe in things like kindness or affection, you know?”

Lilium had on a face that could be described as having been caught off guard.

“So, why don’t you try getting along with her as best you can?”

“...Is it alright? That I... still continue to be at her side”

“Like I’ve been saying so many times, the right to decide that isn’t with me, you know. To begin with, no matter what I say, that person would eventually do whatever she wants anyway”

“Would her lord knight also allow me to stay by her side?”

“To people who inflict harm to my older sister, it’s honestly– it’s honestly terrifying, and Wolf would have persistently pried up their past and continuously tormented

them or something, but other than to those people, he's pretty lenient"

"...I'll bear that in mind"

The moment Liliu left my side, she waved her hand at me, carrying the first cute smile befitting her age on her face.

While waving back a hand in return, I thought. By all means, I want her to do her best.

Rather than seeing her flirting with a guy (Wolf), isn't it a given that seeing her get along with a girl (Liliu) is infinitely better for my mental health?

Chapter 10

A calm day followed.

That day — the day of the dance lesson, Wolf's unpredictable words were effective to bring me back to my senses. For me, that one sentence had me trusting his sincerity.

But, it was really embarrassing. The moment my mind wrapped around what was said, my brain tissues seemed to have boiled away.

Although it was nice that he subsequently invited me out to the dance floor for the last dance, with my head completely blanked out, my dancing must've been a completely terrible sight. I can only pray that I somehow went along with Wolf's lead.

In any case, instead of things like the game developments which I'd played in my previous existence, I decided to believe in Wolf's sincerity.

And, generally speaking, even if it's Lily, if she knew that I was holding a doubt like this in me, she'd surely be taken aback from my earlier impoliteness.

The me right now had the luxury to laugh at how upset I'd been a while ago.

Lily's studies were also going as planned.

Of course, we're still not at the point where we've gained back four years' worth of delay, though. Most of the teachers expressed their understanding for her to easily digest more rudimentary subjects during class. Among them, some were even more proactive than the rest, there were some who suggested topics suitable for Lily, and there were even some who prepared lower-level textbooks for her.

At the end of the day, teachers like hard-working students. That was something to be happy about.

As her lessons on magic advanced, Lily's magical aptitude was made clear.

In other words, she showed strong aptitude in healing magic and had the potential to handle a considerably wide range of other magics. Quite OP, I know.

When I say, [had the potential], it's because, at present, Lily hasn't used any magic except healing.

In fact, since she caused an accident in the past by means of a magical outburst, due to that trauma, she has a strong psychological aversion against using any magic aside from healing.

I don't know whether she'll overcome that circumstance or not, but it may turn out to be the key to Lily's magic mastery in the future.

Anyhow, that circumstance was a problem that nothing could be done about even if we rush it.



On that day, from morning onwards, I waited for lunch to arrive, my heart pounding with excitement.

My enthusiasm to start today's lunch surpassed the usual. If I were to be asked by how much, it was to the point where I attended the morning class lectures without eating breakfast.

Since class lectures were relatively quiet, I realized once I came into the classroom that if my stomach grumbled loudly there, it would be bad. I attended the lessons while trembling with fear, but thankfully, I didn't meet social death. Honestly, it's a relief.

If I were to say the reason why I was looking forward to lunch, it was because for today's lunch, our group of four, comprising of Lily, Wolf, Shade and I, had a prearranged plan to have lunch outdoors.

An inconspicuous yet comfortable-looking place was marked as our choice of venue. From an upper-classman serving the dorm-head to a lower-classman, it was a treasured spot that was passed down through word of mouth.

I was in charge of deciding & securing the spot, Wolf's was cooking, Shade's was transporting the baggage and Lily's was being the guest. Those were the allotment of

responsibilities.

To be honest, Wolf was an infinitely better cook than me. I wasn't particularly bad at cooking, but when Wolf makes it, the skill and taste was, without exaggeration, a level on its own; in regards to this, I admit my defeat.

Although at one period in the past, I was the one who taught him how to cook, I couldn't have imagined that since then, Wolf would end up having an interest in cooking. Maybe it was due to Wolf's earnest personality, he has the tendency to stick to things once he decides to do it. It seems he brought some fairly decent cooking equipment into his room at the dormitory. Of course, he didn't do something like have a kitchen from his home installed into the dormitory room. But, having such an unrestrained side, Wolf was *still* a rich young master from a well-to-do family.

Well, as a woman, I was the slightest bit torn by complicated thoughts with regards to the gap in cooking skill between us. But, when I considered the poisoning attempt that happened to him in the past, him simply agreeing to an invitation of a "let's eat lunch outside" with a smile on his face should be enough to be delighted about.

Incidentally, Shade was an eating expert. And, since it seems like Lily is willing to show her cooking abilities to me one of these days, I'm looking forward to it from now on.

Today should have been a wonderful lunch, at any rate.

Right as I was leaving the classroom to hurriedly head towards the specified location, it would've gone better if I hadn't gotten involved with the blonde.

"Huh? Boss! Boss! Lady boss!"

Do you think I'd turn around just because you want me to? Ignoring him as I walked, Art, not giving up, ran up to me with a trot. Naturally, he took his entourage along behind him.

As expected, when you become plainly involved with a mass of swarming people to this extent, the only thing you can do is stop your feet.

"...I'd already told you I wasn't going to reply if you used that nickname, hadn't I?"

"Understood, Dorm Head Lycoris"

Since it was rare that Art would obediently change his words, I went 'oh?' then thought.

Art, who was smiling and appearing to be in good humour, narrowed his light-brown eyes which were the spitting image of his elder sister's, with ample charm; only his outward appearance was undisputably like that of an angel.

"You're awfully obedient today, aren't you?"

"I'm always obediennnttt. Let's go to the cafeteria together!"

"Sorry, but I have something else planned. Maybe next time"

"When's next time going to be?"

"I'm okay with any time. So long as you just tell me beforehand"

"But we met today, so now should be fine!"

Even though it was troublesome, I was cornered.

"Give up for today. This should be fine, right? Anyway, it's not like you're alone"

I implicitly hinted at his entourage while I said it, but he objected right away.

"I don't wanna! Unless you go with me, I'll die of loneliness!"

Is he trying to act like a rabbit? This rascal.

Even if he's the cute type, nevertheless, is this behavior really acceptable for a man in his mid-teens? I wish he'd pay even a little attention to his honour as a man.

"You won't die. *End. Of. Discussion*"

When I said this, leaving no option to talk back, Art puffed out his cheeks.

Ahh, if only Wolf or Shade was here! They would've been able to pin Art down by force or something, but with me alone, that's impossible.

The plan to head to the designated place individually in order for us not to stand out has backfired.

Of course, in this situation, Art's "look-only" watchdog was useless.

"Please listen to reason, Art"

When I tried asking him imploringly, Art's expression changed slightly.

"...h~~mm. You must be doing something important"

"That's right! Do you understand it now?"

"Well... fine. As long as you go with me to the cafeteria next time"

"I understand! See you, Art"

I walked away in great spirits.

Of course, I had wanted to run out, but I can't recklessly run inside the school with the public's eyes on me. But then again, it wouldn't look well if the person responsible for securing the place came last.

I guess Art has finally exuded the self-awareness to be an upper-classman, huh? What optimistic things I've started to think about.

Eventually, I was first to arrive at the specified spot.

After a while, Lily showed up, and we both started setting up the things needed for lunch.

With the way we were, we never noticed the gaze of the light brown eye watching us intently.

Chapter 11

The final lesson of that day finished up and we were dismissed inside the classroom. While slowly tidying up the used sewing tools, I breathed out a sigh. Rather than a sigh of sorrow, the sigh I made put across the meaning of 'I wish I could get this over with'.

(Today's afternoon lesson has been... an ordeal)

Packed full after filling my stomach from lunch, my body, following instincts, made it clear that it needed rest that afternoon.

Frankly speaking, I was sleepy. I was dying to take an afternoon nap.

No one called me out on my behaviour of constantly nodding off, so being dismissed without incident was deeply moving for me.

This school carried out theoretical lessons entirely in the morning, but, I think the schedule is pretty reasonable.

If theoretical lessons had been conducted in the afternoon, I don't think I could've avoided an afternoon nap, given the lullaby that was the teacher's voice.

(But strangely enough, now that the lessons are over, things like drowsiness are now somehow being blown off...)

'I guess whether it be this world or Japan, some things never change', I mused, buried in my thoughts.

It was then that the clattering sounds of hurried footsteps, from the direction of the corridor, came in.

"Lycoris-oneesama! It's Arutad-kun!"

"Where!?"

“At the courtyard!”

This tacit understanding was, sad to say, due to the bygone days we were made to be accustomed to from the turmoils that Art had raised.

The girl, who'd been so bold as to run towards an upperclassmen classroom, was someone who got along well with one of Art's followers in the same year as him, and one of the girls whom I instructed to inform me if anything happened.

I listened to her account as we headed towards the courtyard.

According to her, during this afternoon's lessons, Art and several others in his entourage didn't show up, making her suspicious. After that, just as lessons were over, since that one person in Art's entourage had been acting sneakily, she shadowed that person, and from what she said, the follower attempted contact with Lily.

“I didn't quite manage to catch what they were talking about, but after that, the two of them headed towards the courtyard together. They met up with Arutad and his friends there, and since it felt somehow very ominous, I decided to notify you, Onee-sama...”

“Thank you. That was very helpful”

Though, I'd prefer the use of [Onee-sama] to stop during strained circumstances, on this occasion, I closed my eyes to it.

With the courtyard's greenery coming to view, I gave a sigh of relief seeing Lily standing face-to-face with Art and his group. It looks like a fight hasn't broken out yet.

But, once I came closer, I noticed that something was strange with Lily. She stood there stock still, both hands over her chest, staring at a particular spot.

Followed the destination of that gaze, I unconsciously stopped in my tracks, feeling a dizzying case of déjà vu.

The destination of Lily's gaze.

On top of the piled up soil, was a rod erected ostentatiously.

While feeling the color drain from my face, I stared at the [gravesite].

“...why... did you...”

When Lily formed those words with such difficulty as to be strained, Art’s derisive laughter came around.

“I thought I’d make you learn your place as a commoner. Of course, the reason the bird became a sacrifice was because you didn’t have any other friends. Funny, huh~”

Though this line was horrible and also unpleasant, it was as it had been in the game. I feel like the animal killed in the game was definitely not a bird, but aside from that, the rest was all the same.

(But, this event was supposed to take place much, much later...)

I thought as if explaining it in my mind.

Inside the game, there was certainly a scene where Art killed an animal that Lily was affectionate with. At that time, this was also how it went, him thrusting a flashy-made grave before Lily.

Something like he couldn’t forgive Lily getting attached to someone else, was the sort of reason he gave.

But in this stage, where Art and Lily’s relationship wasn’t even close to acquaintances, such a cruel thing shouldn’t have happened. No, it didn’t happen in the game.

But in reality, before my eyes was a small grave. The tip of the shovel was left as it was, affixed horizontally on the soil. At the side, a hole that appeared to have been dug up just a moment ago was... mh?

Even as I was stuck in thought, Lily, who finally remembered to move, staggered closer to the grave. The overlooking Art jeered as she softly reached out a hand to that lump of soil.

“Don’t tell me, you’re trying to dig it up? You really want to be face-to-face with a messed up friend? Uwaa, what bad tas~te”

Lily drew back her hands with a frightened jolt. During that recoil, the accumulated tears at the edge of Lily's bright green eyes trickled down.

With that, my last bit of patience ran out.

I walked up to Art in long strides, having forgotten even my manners, and before a slightly flustered Art could say anything, I slapped him on the cheek with all my might.

With a loud slap, a nice, satisfying sound was made as my palms felt the throb of pain.

I thought he'd hit me back in the heat of the moment, but Art simply stared at my face with his mouth open in dumbfoundment, 'idiot' written all over his face.

Including the spectators, everyone here went dead silent.

That's right, the courtyard, to an extent, was a place that can be conspicuous. Seeing that such a commotion happened at the courtyard, the fact that Art had picked Lily as a bullying target must have already circulated to the entire student population by now. It's likely that this will induce others to bully her. And of course, he probably did it knowing that would happen. To my annoyance, Art was a boy that was capable of such calculation.

I was in a rage, but my thoughts were composed. Virtually prepared to contend with Art, I looked for allies amongst the spectators.

The first to remember to move, was that one person in Art's entourage. Really, what a completely useless watchdog he was.

"Y-you're mistaken, Lycoris-sama! We never caught the bird in the end, this grave – we only piled up soil to trick her!"

In the end, he gave an explanation to something that I'd rather be left unsaid.

Lily probably didn't notice with all the commotion, but the fact that a hole was right there beside the grave was a little strange. Generally speaking, the normal sequence was to first dig a hole, put the corpse in, then cover it with soil from the top.

Not only that, catching a wild bird, no matter how accustomed to Lily it was, was still

a difficult task. Making a fake grave then using it to scare her seems more likely.

“Lily, it’s just as you heard. That little bird is most likely fine”

Lily raised her face, taken aback.

“Lycoris, I...”

“Yes. Go and find the bird. I’ll manage this somehow”

Lily nodded at my words, then ran off towards the forest where the little lapis lazuli-colored bird was likely located.

“S-since you made a mistake, apologize! Getting hit is really painful! “

When Art shouted at me from behind, I looked at him over my shoulder.

“A mistake? You were planning to kill the bird, weren’t you?”

“That’s right, but we told you we couldn’t do it in the end, didn’t we! That woman just got tricked because she was stupid enough not to find anything fishy about it”

“I completely understand it now”

This time, I intended to hit Art’s cheek with clenched fists. Because I knew it was my own indulgence that I ended up unconsciously slapping him earlier.

But, sure enough, the second time, even Art didn’t resign to accept getting hit. Since Art seized my wrist, in close range, I simply glared at him.

“I thought even you would mature a little bit if I persistently nagged at you, but my outlook was too naive. In these three years, you really didn’t grow up at all. Being in charge of educating you is really impossible for me”

Declaring it vehemently as I faced him, Art, as always, uttered the same thing he usually did.

“...why?”

“ [Why], you ask? Until you understand, don’t speak with her **or** me. I won’t forgive you. Especially if you give Lily an apology that doesn’t come from the heart”

Once I declared those words, a large shadow obstructed my field of vision. Since I quickly realized it was Wolf, I breathed out a sigh of relief.

After Wolf twisted Art’s arm pretty violently for me, he held out a handkerchief for me.

I thought it was because I looked like I was about to cry, but in reality, my eyes were already brimming with tears. It wasn’t something I’d brag about.

“Wolf, could I leave Art to you? I’d like to find Lily”

“No, let’s go together”

Since Wolf insisted, we eventually left Art to the care of a teacher nearby and headed to the forest to follow Lily. However, even though our time difference wasn’t too big, Lily was nowhere to be found.

Afterwards, we assembled a group of people to search for Lily, but it was only after even night had wore on that we found her.

With an exhausted face, she came back aimlessly to the dormitory and ended up sleeping, almost as if she’d blacked out.

She kept sleeping for nearly a whole day after that.

Chapter 12

The cause of Lily's coma was diagnosed as something like fatigue by means of magic depletion. Though the details were something that made everyone incline their heads in wonder, even Lily herself, who had woken up, seemed puzzled.

[I didn't use magic yesterday. We never used magic during class either...]

This was what Lily said, according to the woman assigned as the doctor for the female dormitory.

She clearly remembered being called out by Art, the trouble that followed, and even until she went looking for the bird in the forest. Yet, her memories after that was strangely unclear.

Lily found the bird, as it was, in its usual spot. However, the little bird didn't come down to Lily like it always did.

Thinking that the little bird might have been injured, Lily chased after the young animal as it flew away.

In favour of looking up as she made chase, it seemed that when Lily, who wasn't too familiar with the terrain, realized it, she was already in a place she didn't know. From there, Lily's memories became more and more unclear.

I'm certain I encountered someone, was what Lily had seemingly said. But, for some reason, I can't recall a thing about the other person.

I ended up having a considerably long discussion with that person. And when I realized it, it was already late, so I hurried back to the dormitory.

It was an entirely vague story.

With even the female doctor bewildered, this was what I, who stormed in, was told.

From beginning till the end, Lily had been somewhat absent-minded, it was like she

was trying hard to follow those string of memories. But, eventually, without recalling who that person she had been with was, she ended up going back to sleep again. This happened last night.

To be on the safe side, Lily was taking a break from class today.

“Even if she’s dopey from her coma, whatever the circumstances may be, don’t you think her memories are way too ambiguous? “

Since Shade said this, expressing something rude in his words, I glared at my younger brother, putting various meanings into my gaze.

“Don’t say something as impolite as [dopey]. Lily is the victim here, you know”

Since Shade, at times, makes cynical remarks by habit, I know he doesn’t mean anything ill from it. But, I couldn’t bring myself to ignore it today. Just before what may have been an outbreak of a sibling quarrel, Wolf nobly intervened.

“If her memories are unclear to that extent, there is a possibility that magic was involved”

“Yeah. I think so too”

I nodded with a “that’s exactly what I thought”, then flauntingly, I flattered him with an “as expected of Wolf”. Shade faced the other way, acting slightly pig-headed.

Today, our group brought food into the small cafeteria for visitor use and had our lunch. Although the special rights, which were granted to the dormitory head and the prefects, wind up being called excessive, that was pretty much it. Since we didn’t break the tacit understanding of not littering and not causing too much uproar, getting permission to use this room with just a reason of [we have something we wanted to discuss a bit about] wasn’t difficult.

“We’ve confirmed that this wasn’t the work of magic muddling her memories, at present. But, maybe that person who Lily was talking to, applied magic on himself making him difficult to remember. There has to be a method for how he did it”

“If that’s the case, who was she talking with? Why would he go to the trouble of concealing himself? And, why did her magic dry up?”

Wolf's words apparently piqued Shade's interest, since the sulking Shade suddenly returned to the conversation.

"But Miss Lilium's power was strong enough to break the measuring instrument, wasn't it? For it to have dried up, you've got to wonder what on earth that amount of magic was used for"

"You do know Lily should only be able to use healing magic, right?"

"That's what makes it so mysterious, don't you think? Do you think she resurrected the dead or something?"

"That's not the scope of healing magic-", I stopped midway, having realized. Lily's magic was non-standard.

"...for what reason would a dead person be inside the school"

"Maybe someone died from some sort of accident inside the school. Having been on-site, Miss Lilium performed resuscitation by magic. Then, someone used some sort of magic so she couldn't remember"

Although it was quite absurd, the chance of it wasn't zero. As I was led astray, Wolf countered Shade's theory.

"Finding a corpse and resurrecting the dead are both fairly shocking events. Casting magic to conceal these so that nothing remains in the person's memories is likely impossible"

"Well then, there's still the possibility that Miss Lilium was lying from the start, isn't there?"

Wolf didn't reply to counter this.

It was at that moment that I became painfully aware of the fact that these two didn't entirely trust Lily's words.

"...there are still other possibilities. Maybe [whoever] met up with Lily was after Lily's magic. Since her magic abilities are strong, the person might have been scheming to

use her magic”

“Are you saying that someone can actually use other people’s powers?”

“I’ve only heard it in stories, but, I’ve seen records of the country and the association performing experiments trying to do so”

“And so? Did those experiments actually work?”

“It did show some results, you know.

But the performance and success rate were very low considering a complicated, grand-scale magical equipment is needed”

“So, are you saying that even if the person painstakingly takes Miss Lilium’s strong magic, he can’t really do anything with it? What’s more, you’re saying that a [complicated grand-scale magical equipment] is actually in this school?”

“...This standpoint in which I have absolutely no evidence to support my opinion is exactly like your theory a while ago, don’t you think?”

“Ah~ yes, yes. In other words, this is Elder Sister’s sophistry, isn’t it?”

When I tried answering back, Shade cut me off, saying “let’s go back to discussing it seriously” in a low tone.

“Elder sister, you’re way too decided that everything that’s happening to Miss Lilium lately is all because of outside factors, you know?”

“ Well that’s because this is Art’s doing. Don’t you think it should be clear that Lily is the victim in all of this?”

“Although there’s no doubt that she’s a victim in terms of what Art did, we still don’t know what happened after that. After Art’s fallout with you, he’s been under close watch together with his followers, so, shouldn’t we consider that [what happened after that] was an entirely different incident? Although it’s natural to worry about a friend who’s been comatose for a whole day, please calm down a little”

Getting told off by Shade while simultaneously getting patted by Wolf on the head with a “there, there”, I ended up scowling.

“I intend to calm down, though”

Even while I retorted back, Shade laughed contemptuously at me.

“Only [intend to], huh? Well, I won’t say that everything Miss Liliu said was a lie, but if her memory was really foggy, then her assertion that she didn’t use magic is strange. The discrepancy might be because the report came from someone else, but please be a little suspicious about it”

After he said this, I was taken aback.
He’s certainly right when he puts it that way.

“It looks like we may have to hear the full account directly from her for now, Lycoris. After that, I just hope you keep in mind...”

Since that was a sign that even Wolf was going to give me a sermon, I shrank back a little. But, when he continued, Wolf’s voice was gentle.

“Swallowing someone’s words isn’t proof of friendship and doubting someone’s words doesn’t necessarily mean you’re acting against that friendship either. At least, that’s what I think”

I took in the words that Wolf said as he looked right at me with those blue-violet eyes.

Swallowing Lily’s words wasn’t a proof of our friendship. Is it really okay even if I doubt her words?

“What’s important is that you make an effort at that time to support your friend. That’s also why you need to determine the truth with your own eyes”

The words were ideological, but I got what he was trying to say. Wolf — and, unfortunately, even Shade, were, in a sense, my coaches in making friends.

“...I understand. I’ll bear that in mind”

“Please do. When I’m looking at you now, I feel a little uneasy. I know you’re happy to get a friend though”

Even to an outsider, I'd probably looked pretty fired up when Lily became my friend. It's a little embarrassing.

"Saying something like this probably won't make much of a difference, but... I'd rather you don't get hurt"

But, I think it's pretty embarrassing to say something like that with a deadly earnest expression, even for Wolf.

While my face reddened, Shade's face looked like he'd just eaten something sour.

Following the pair's advice, I planned to hear the full account from Lily. I did keep in mind that she might not tell me the truth.

However, even after several days had passed, I didn't get the chance to personally talk with her. She'd shown up to class after the three days worth of rest, but she never showed up at the dormitory library room.

When I think of the frequency that Lily appeared in the library room until now, it should have been obvious that she was avoiding me.

Mustering up my courage on one occasion during the night, I tried to go to her room, but the room was quiet and had no lights on. When I considered that she was sleeping since she hasn't fully recovered, I couldn't bring myself to intrude on her.

Furthermore, if Lily was getting better, it didn't look like it from what I saw of her outside of school. Even at a distance, I could tell she was tired since the skin around her eyes had dark circles. I could tell it wasn't merely a trivial matter.

If so, then I have to do a frontal attack — I had decided to hear from her by summoning her as the dormitory head.

But then, news arrived to me that Art had received serious injuries.

And that... was just the start of the terrible chain of events to follow.

Chapter 13

Art's injuries were a dislocated left arm and a bone fracture on his right leg. It seems he had fallen from the stairs.

Since it happened at the dormitory's stairs, there were many witnesses. From the moment when Art, who was walking alone, dazed and unusually without his entourage, fell down the stairs, up until the moment he seized the handrail with his left arm in panic, but unable to regain his balance and tumbled down – the students were all there to witness it.

Since Art seemed to have been dishing out complaints that the painkillers weren't working at all, by the time Wolf and Shade rushed in, I was at ease for the moment.

Nevertheless, it didn't change the fact that he sustained serious injuries. It seems like his followers were all very distraught, and because the female students weren't allowed inside the male dormitories, they were especially heartbroken.

But well... there are doctors who use healing magic in the school. Even if this was considered a big deal, Art should've come back to school healthy after 2-3 days.

However, he didn't come to school, disregarding what was widely expected of him.

If one were to ask why, it's because Art was throwing a tantrum.

That boy, who was being an inconvenience to others, said this:

[Until Lycoris comes to visit me, I won't go back to school]

That... seemed to have been what he said.

The moment I heard this, I was annoyed.

"Hah?", like a yakuza, I made a sound that would even turn delinquents pale. In my head, that is.

After all, the one who came to relay these words of Art was just someone amongst

Art's followers, a girl in the same year as Art. She meant no ill intention from it.

Although in a fit of anger, I intentionally ignored the request, that actually ended up tying to another disturbance.

When I heard that Lily was called out by Art's follower in the pretense of [wanting to apologize or something], I hurriedly rushed out of my classroom. A feeling of déjà vu, that something like this has just happened quite recently, cut in.

Actually, since I was also thinking of talking to Lily today even if I had to summon her out, this meant someone beat me to the punch.

In any case, I wasn't deluded enough to think that his followers would call Lily out just to apologize.

Their thinking, sad to say, was something I quickly ended up guessing. In short, they speculated if things go well, they could use Lily in order to make me go visit Art. A scene where his followers put Lily on the spot by prostrating themselves before her came to mind.

But then, what I saw when I rushed in, was a much more terrifying sight.

With a crash, a loud destructive sound was made.

As it reflected in the sunlight, the torrent of glass rained down over Lily and the group.

Though it was quite pathetic of me, I simply stared at the scene in shock.

Once I finally came to my senses, I saw, amidst the flying glass shards, Art's followers suffering small cuts on the bare portions of their skin such as the face and hands.

There were probably some who got hit by the unfortunately large shards, besides the male students, who were dripping blood from their arms plain enough even for an onlooker to see, several remained where they were, unable to stand up, either due to fear or surprise.

Big or small injuries aside, objects that could turn into lethal weapons were falling from above in large quantities. I wonder how terrifying it must be. At any rate, I, at least, had to calm down, I told myself.

Since there was a boy who rushed over here after spotting me, I halted him by shouting

“don’t run!”.

“Move calmly and slowly so you don’t get injured by the glass. You musn’t scrape off the broken glass on your clothes with your hands”

The property which makes it difficult for things like a car’s window glass to hurt the human body is famous in modern day Japan, but the glass fragments here form rough sharp edges when they break, so it is dangerous indeed. When I glanced up, the large glass window on the second floor was completely void of glass, its frame the only thing intact.

I observed the state of the male student’s injury, which looked to be a deep cut made in his haste, then pressed down on the blood vessel to stop the bleeding.

Even though it was a little ironic that the teachers quickly rushed over all thanks to the loud noise, I was still thankful for it.

“Lily! Are you hurt!?”

I called out to Lily, who was all by herself, paralyzed on the spot a short distance away. Face dreadfully pale, she looked like she was about to collapse at any time.

“Lycoris...”

Muttering in a scarcely audible voice that was so unlike Lily, she cast her eyes down as if afraid of something.

There wasn’t any visible injury I could see on her, so for the time being, I was relieved.

“Anyway, go to the medical office if you can walk”

I pinched Lily’s dress and tried shaking off glass from it. But, not even one glittering shard fell from her dress.

Then, for the first time, I started to realize that the glass fragments were not falling around Lily. It was completely clear of falling debris, almost as if the shards were avoiding her.

Lily, as if she was afraid of something, continued to look down.

These details... spread throughout the school in a flash.

Even if we can't conceal the amount of damage that came out, there was something I was dreading very much.

(At that time...)

When I heard the crash, a fragment of glass fell down. Logically speaking, when something collides with glass that's attached to a window frame, broken shards will fall down. If the broken pieces fell outside, the possibility that it was smashed from inside the building was high.

However, if it was just something that collided into the window, it was strange that not a single glass remained on the frame.

A power that could single-handedly hit the entirety of the large window glass, in this school, it's obvious to infer that [it was magic].

In short, the glass piece broke due to magic, then rained down on top of a mass of people. it only avoided one person.

My fear was soon becoming a reality.

Inside the school, one rumour had spread as if it was a fact.

That the incident which happened today was due to Lilium Valley's magic. No... they're saying that to begin with, Arutad Brugmansia's injuries were done by Lilium as an act of revenge.

Chapter 14

The recklessly-stated rumours were rapidly embellished through hearsay.

Eventually, the rumours that [Lilium Valley was involved in causing the injuries] and the like, were told as if they was true.

Some of the students ended up getting frightened by this rumour.

The new students, in particular, who still hadn't gotten used to dormitory life, raised their unease, and some girls ended up crying, so for the prefects and I, it was chaotic.

While trying to calm the girls down by soothing and humoring them, I was worried sick about Lily.

In the end, though it was inexcusable for me to do so, I snuck away, leaving the new students in the care of the prefects. When I headed towards Lily's room in a quick pace, sure enough, I had a problem of my own.

"If you've caused harm to people by using magic for your own self-interest, then you're not fit to be a student of this school"

The voice that said this to Lily, and which resounded all the way outside the room, was a familiar one. A person in the same year as me, that is to say – a final year student by the name of Viola. In the previous year, she was also the person that served as a prefect together with me.

Even though she's a little quick at jumping to conclusions, she's intense when she makes up her mind. When I said it that way, it would seem like she's a person that wasn't appropriate as a prefect, but, coincidentally, Viola was a woman that was both diligent and helpful. Since her grandfather was a multimillionaire, he was awarded the position of a baron, but it couldn't be inherited – a life peer, as one would call it. The fact that she, who never had high standings if we're talking about her social status alone, became a dormitory prefect, meant her appointment was largely due to her own wit and popularity.

I drew in a slightly long breath to calm down. If my opponent is Viola, I had to get her to understand without agitating the situation.

Although Lily's room was blocked by the curious onlookers, I still managed to see the situation inside.

There were three people who were confronting the owner of the room, Viola and her two friends. From a step behind Viola, sending a relentless look to Lily, was a brown-haired female student. If memory serves me right, her little sister was part of Art's entourage. Maybe she couldn't sit still with her little sister injured, but coming to a lower-year student's room as a trio to yell at Lily was cruel all the same.

"...I... didn't use magic at that time..."

Even though it was in a soft voice, Viola's friend had to raise her own voice in order to drown out Lily's resolute reply.

"As if I'd believe you! Don't you know that everyone present there was injured? Everyone, that is, except you, Lilium Valley!"

Her agitated voice was shrill, turning a deaf ear to Lily's words. It seems this one is even harder to crack than Viola.

"Excuse me. Would you kindly let me pass."

When I raised my voice, everyone stared in my direction. The curious onlookers all had on a look that said [oh, dear!] and apologetically opened a path for me.

When I stepped into the room and met their gazes, Lily cast her eyes down in a complicated look. I didn't expect that reaction to sting, but at any rate, right now, I had to do something about this commotion.

"First, I'd like someone to explain why, as final-year students, the three of you are causing a commotion at a place like this"

I turned back from Lily, facing Viola and her group.

Taking into account the trio's personalities and power dynamics, I believe persuading Viola would be the best course of action.

But, I wonder if she'd decided to visit this place before taking a bath. Her golden hair was still in a flawlessly vertical roll that hasn't changed at all since morning. I'll be saying it once again, **her golden hair was in a vertical roll**. Maybe I'll say it one more time: **GOLDEN HAIR. VERTICAL ROLL**.

She is the most dazzling beauty of the magical academy. Her golden lashes should've absolutely had a weak claim compared to black hair, but even at the best of times, her big violet eyes more than stood out for it. Since it looks like around five matchsticks can be put on it, I'll certainly try testing it out someday. ⁽¹⁾

With an impressive pointed nose, she unyieldingly displayed a mix of confidence and cuteness. Her stature wasn't tall, yet, due to her dignified behavior, she had presence.

"As a final year student, Lilium just arrived at this school, so I merely thought to explain the significance of using magic to her"

"Even if that's the case, there's no need to have three people, is there?"

Looking as if I hit her where it hurt, Viola glanced behind her.

Although she had a slight tendency to be reckless, she wasn't someone who'd form a clique just to show someone contempt. She probably ended up driven to righteous indignation after seeing her friend in tears.

"That's... certainly as you say. Doing things in this way wasn't right"

It seems Viola had quickly reflected on her actions.

When I nodded and said "great, great", pleased with myself, I was given a tense glare by Viola.

"But having said that, did you clearly understand why we came here after circumventing you, the dormitory head?"

"Eh?"

"There's a rumour within the dormitory"

"If it's the rumour about Lilium, then I know about it. It's completely unfounded"

“It isn’t just that. There’s also a rumour related to you. And if you ask me, that rumour may be even more serious”

My eyes widened in surprise and Viola nodded as if to say ‘it’s just as I thought’.

“It seems you are not aware of it. The rumour goes like this: [Dorm head Lycoris is covering for Lilium Valley because she’s a very close friend. Since there is partiality, she probably won’t hand down fair judgment against Lilium]”

I listened to those words, feeling bitter.

The curious onlookers watched over, holding their breaths, wondering how I’d answer Viola’s words. When I observed that situation, I could tell that the rumour that Viola voiced out had circulated as common understanding among the girls.

Naturally, there was an occasion that came to mind. During the incident when the glass fell today, I had called out to her with a [Lily]. Even if I hadn’t, it wouldn’t be strange for someone to notice, perchance, that Lily and I were meeting in the dormitory’s library.

It was sensible for the girls to call it [favoritism]. And, since they decided I couldn’t be counted on, they probably got Viola to carry out the responsibility instead.

“So, would you mind explaining?”

Although I looked at Lily as Viola pressed me, she remained looking down with whatever thoughts she was tormenting herself with. For the time being, I conveyed what I must as the dormitory head.

“...regardless of a friendship between Lilium and I, I would like to amend the [guilty until proven innocent] attitude”

After looking around, I glanced at the brown-haired student standing behind Viola.

“Lilium’s magic aptitude specializes on healing. I doubt she’d be able to break the glass”

“T-that’s because... Lilium’s power is... special...”

And, as if to say that adequately explained everything, that was all she said. I understand she was worried about her little sister, but that doesn't mean it's okay to blame Lily.

"If you're saying we should press this crime on Lilium for that reason, then wouldn't that way of thinking no doubt be [guilty until proven innocent]? This is precisely why we should consider the conduct fitting for magical academy students. Right now, we're no different from those people in history who forced the cause of all disasters upon those who own magic"

Although it was long before this country we have today, our ancient history had a past of persecuting those with magic. For those possessing magic, history was never told without it.

Even the girls, who had been looking on curiously, collectively hanged their heads in shame upon my words. However, Viola alone, was different.

"I understand what you said. Even I believe that storming into an underclassman's room is imprudent. But, I hadn't heard a single answer. In the end, is there a friendship between Miss Lycoris and Lilium Valley? Was it not because you kept it poorly hidden, that a rumour like this emerged?"

(Uu...)

I was taken by surprise when she hit me where it hurt. Certainly, having come this far, it would look more suspicious to hide it.

"Without a doubt, Lilium– Lily is my friend"

Upon my words, the students buzzed with chatter.

...well, I don't think it was that surprising. Maybe they found it strange that someone actually became friends with me.

"She's an important friend, that's why I believe her. But, I won't force any of you to think the same. I only want you to calm down"

After saying that, I snuck a glimpse at Lily, curious about her response. If she's angry, I'd been thinking of whole-heartedly apologizing, but she fixed her wide-open, fresh verdure eyes in my direction. I couldn't perceive her gaze as angry. Bewilderment, and

if that wasn't just my conceit, joy, colored her face.

It's honestly been a very long time since I properly met her eyes.

Although there was a troubling turmoil going on, since it felt like I got through to her after so long, I felt glad.

I relaxed, letting my guard down, but, as if pouring cold water over my heart...

A change happened.

Suddenly, without any prior notice, the color in Lily's eyes changed.

That wasn't a metaphor.

From the bright fresh verdure, the color seemed to congeal to a dark green.

Startled as I was, in front of me, Lily cowered, trying to press down her own eyes with both hands.

"...Stop! Don't come! N-NOOOO!!"

In a tone different from usual, Lily shouted. Startled, the curious onlookers, including even Viola, watched Lily closely.

"Run away! Lycoris!"

Even if Lily pleaded frantically for me to do so, under these circumstances, there's no way I can just leave her behind and run away.

While I don't really understand what's going on, I instructed the students to leave the room.

"Viola, could you call a teacher?"

"Y-yes. I understand"

I waited until she ran out of the room, then, just as I approached Lily's side, with a crash, the glass windows in Lily's room shattered. Although I stood prepared, recalling

the incident that happened during the day, the glass piece did not rain on me.

Instead, as if it didn't care at all about the turmoil that happened, a small lapis lazuli shadow elegantly came diving into the room. Appearing from outside which was already shrouded in darkness, was, what shouldn't have been in the dark – a small bird.

In front of my wary eyes, it abruptly changed appearance.

In the next flicker of a moment, standing there was a deep blue-haired figure possessing beauty that wasn't human. Its eye color was a dark green, closer in color to black. Earlier, when Lily's eyes changed, the color was just like this. The clothes wrapped around its body was somewhat anachronistic, it looked to me like that profile was artificially molded and the colors that joined together were sculpted.

But, what was most alien to me was that the scenery opposite him could be seen through. He was semi-transparent. He wasn't a spectre though. I knew this man's natural shape.

With a chill running down my spine, in my mind, I shouted.

(S-secret chara–!!)

Author's notes:

*Secret chara

Also called hidden character. It's referring to characters that appear in the game when you satisfy a certain set of conditions. Generally, in otome games, it's a cheeky surprise on the development side where [truthfully, a character like this can also appear to fall in love with you], but, as for a work on a yandere otome game, it's a one of a kind harassment where [truthfully, a yandere like this can also appear to attack you].

Chapter 15

The secret chara's name was Gift. His image color was blue.

I wouldn't have thought it was possible for a character's past and personality to be so ill-matched to such a lovely name.

Gift was, in outline, human in species. However, his age easily crossed to a little over a hundred.

We learned about him at school... as the worst possible case of magical rampage.

In the past, his birthplace, a village among the mountains, had simply disappeared because of Gift's rampage. The king in those days, unable to grasp what exactly happened, sent an army to that territory. And so, the army, who was responsible for protecting a child, the sole survivor of the village, was, on that same night, wiped out by that child — by Gift.

Even though the information after this came not from the lessons on history, but from my knowledge of the game, what he had to say went something like this.

[It's scary not knowing what living humans would do to me. That's why I killed them]

Afterwards, Gift was captured at the price of countless sacrifices, but he was ultimately never killed. Demonstrating a talent of a kind never to be seen again in not only attack magic, but also healing magic, it was said that there had been no way to kill him; but, I don't doubt there were researchers in the association who'd regret losing that talent of his too.

And so, Gift was imprisoned in a form close to death. It would also be fine to describe it as "sealed". Due to a large-scale magical device, he was at a state where his magic was always drying up, so it been arranged for him to sleep deep underground. Sometimes, the researchers would visit Gift's location and conduct experiments on him over and over again.

That place was none other than the [guest house].

In other words, the rumoured existence of a [mummy of the demon lord], was actually him. And old Mr. Hemlock, the librarian, was, in reality, the guard protecting the seal over Gift.

I want to say 'don't bury that sort of landmine under the school building where people responsible for the country's future assemble'. I want to say it from the bottom of my heart.

For the sake of never taking out the treasured grimoire out of the guest house, the strongest and most complex barrier was here. "That's why, this place was concluded to be more secure than the other locations," was what Mr. Hemlock explained in the game; but now that I've seen the situation turn out like this, I am, of course, not entirely convinced.

In other words, the country's greatest leaders were lacking in imagination. In this school, the ability to have a yandere fall for you was top-notch. When the heroine, Lily, entered the school, they never even considered the possibility that Gift would start taking action in secret. Think about it, would you!

If Lily was just some powerless girl that a yandere fell for, then it might have turned out alright. However, Lily had exceptional healing magic. She had enough power to, say, revive the mummified Gift.

The rarity that was the pair's love, wherein they shared the loneliness caused by their exceptional magic, was the number one route that I regretted the most playing, even with the [actual game]. The route was called, the academy's destruction route.

To say the least, Gift, who feared humans to the extreme, was a character with destructive thoughts. The sole exception to these thoughts was Lily alone.

[When the world becomes completely leveled with only you and me there, I'm sure it would be the first time that I'll be able to feel relieved from the bottom of my heart], were his lines in the story.

And, under normal circumstances, there would have been nothing I could do before such a terrifying landmine. But, thankfully, I had the [knowledge] of the current situation. It was the knowledge of the game with regards to my past life, as well as the knowledge related to the magical device that was binding this [demon king].

While focusing on the translucent demon king, I called out to Lily.

“Lily, be strong. It’s not as if he’s been freed from the magical equipment. It doesn’t mean his powerful magical abilities have returned to him. He shouldn’t be able to wield power as he pleases”

The semi-transparent body was proof of that. His actual body was still in the basement of the guest house.

Although it would be too late to stop Gift after he gets Lily’s all-out cooperation to fully revive him, it’s not at that stage yet.

Even while thinking of that in my head, my voice quivered. His existence in front of my eyes was exceedingly fleeting, and yet, maybe it was because of how terrifying the talent hidden in that body was. Even with his magic almost gone, I understood, though vaguely, just how large that hole was. An endless abyss. Such words floated in my mind. My instincts felt fear with the emptiness he carried.

Lily had been even more resolute than I. When she nodded, gaining strength with my words, she stepped forward in order to protect me.

Those small shoulders were trembling. As if they were unable to bear the weight of something.

“...Lily. Do you... like him?”

I later thought that this question was out-of-place, but at the moment, it wasn’t meant just to stall time, I felt I had to ask Lily this.

Lily’s gaze remained on Gift as she answered.

“...I had been fiercely captivated. I knew he was hopelessly lonely. So every night, I snuck out of my room and met with him. We talked about a lot of things and sympathized with each other. Our time together, was really fun. To think, there had been someone who needed only me. But...”

I was able to understand the part that Lily couldn’t say out loud. Falling in love with Gift was like falling together into the abyss. But, I dare say, the edge of that abyss

probably wasn't what deterred Lily.

What entered my mind was the enjoyable lunch we had as a group with Wolf and Shade. At that time, I heard her laugh aloud. Without a doubt, she was truly happy then.

"Gift, I won't allow you to hurt anyone else any further"

[It's not "anyone else". But, "that woman", no?]

Gift said with a growl in his voice.

And then, his eyes, which had not even for a moment projected anyone else but Lily since the moment he appeared at this place, went past Lily and moved to me.

The look in those eyes, I wonder what was the best way to describe it?

From those deep green eyes, it was as if jealousy was dripping out.

[Woman, you said there was no power in me. It's just as you said. I don't have any significant amount of magical power. But even then, I can still kill you]

"If you hurt Lycoris, I won't forgive you"

I could only hear Lily's voice somewhere in the distance. At that time, I was trapped in those green, almost black, eyes. My whole body stiffened with terror. I was groping for a spell to protect my body, but doing so simply spurred on the chaos.

In that moment, as if clearing the frigid atmosphere, footsteps resounded from the corridor.

"Lycoris!"

Hearing that reliable voice call out my name, I breathed out a sigh of relief. Actually appearing when I wanted him to was an amazing characteristic of Wolf's.

After that, in a blink of an eye, was an incident.

At the same time as when Wolf stepped into the room, something similar to a black

fog gushed out from Gift's hands and attacked me. And then, with nimble movements, Wolf protected me in his arms.

[I curse you]

I heard Gift say in a murmur.

Then, he turned to Lily and, as if whispering intimacies, said sweetly to her:

[When the people you love, are completely seized by the darkness building in them.
That's when I'll come for you again]

After leaving behind such words, he disappeared from this place like a puff of smoke.

Then, dispersing as if blending into the air, the black fog — disappeared as well.

Chapter 16

That night, I saw a dream.

With Gift's words — the words, [I curse you], lingering in my ears, there's no way I'd see something like a pleasant feel-good dream. What I saw was a bad dream.

In that dream, [Lycoris Radiata] was a repulsive woman who had gone mad with jealousy.

Even though Wolf had repeated the words 'I want you to trust me'.

Even though Lily shed tears and said 'I would never betray you'.

Even when those earnest words were enough to make my chest hurt as I observed the scene, [Lycoris] did not give them her trust.

[Cruel! Even though I loved you! Even though I trusted you!]

With such words filled with betrayal, she did nothing but blame the pair.

In order to blame the two, [Lycoris] did whatever she could think of. She didn't care, not even when it hurt her, not even when it hurt not just those two, but those around her.

If she couldn't have it, she wanted to destroy it as viciously as she could. The only thing she wouldn't allow was a future where the two became happy instead of her.

Even though everyone left her side soon after that, [Lycoris] still didn't admit it. That in the end, she never loved anyone. Never trusted anyone.

Even after I woke up, for some time, I was overcome with surprise.

"That's not it. I... wouldn't do that. I definitely won't. I'm telling the truth, really..."

Setting my body upright on my bed, I continued to explain, not knowing who I was trying to address my explanation to.

I've heard theories that you see dreams to feel relieved. Good dreams to think, [it's great that I saw a good dream]. And bad dreams to think, [it's great that a frightful thing like that isn't real].

Such a thing was a lie, I thought. At least, regarding this bad dream in particular.

I saw a dream again.

In that dream, I was playing the actual game. Wolf's route.

I played with the aim of getting the true end. The degree of difficulty was hard enough that I always had to prevent myself from making a mistake in the choices, but, since it was a comparatively happy story even in the game, it was my favorite.

Since he hated women, he had a perpetual dour look in the beginning. The speech and conduct of the Wolf in-game and the current Wolf was quite different. Maybe it was because he seemed to be overexerting himself, or that he seemed to be putting up a bold front, I felt I couldn't leave him alone.

But, by deepening the relationship with him little by little, his naturally earnest disposition gradually came into view.

The trauma that he was inflicted with would be overcome together. When I watched him talking about his deceased father, it felt as if my heart would be wrenched out.

And so, the story approached the happy ending. In the other side of my terminal screen, the lovers — Lily and Wolf— smiled happily at each other and exchanged a kiss.

When I came to, I muttered "I feel like an idiot". I feel like my heart would tear if I hadn't treated it as a wild, idiotic delusion.

So, I decided, this time for sure, I wouldn't fall asleep again.

Even though my resolution was supposed to be firm, nearing the break of dawn, I saw yet another dream.

That was the shortest and the most frightening dream I had.

A single woman was standing there.

Long black hair. Black eyes. Though beautiful, her expression, in some way, was cold.

I didn't remember her, but I did know her.

"Poor girl"

Her voice, a voice I shouldn't have had any way of hearing, resounded. A voice quite similar to mine.

"You'll never be able to truly love someone. You're my daughter, you're really just like me. Broken. We're a bloodline that goes mad with jealousy"

She reached out a hand to my cheeks. That hand that was viciously cold made me certain she wasn't of the living.

"You mustn't fall in love with anyone. After all, that will end up leading to their misfortune... and to yours"

Stop it, I cried out.

Mother, stop it!

With the sound of that cry, I came to.

Covered in heavy sweat, the night dress clinging to my skin felt uncomfortable.

More than that, it was terrifying since it felt as if the black fog was clinging to my body. Considering the cause of the bad dreams, wasn't this evidently the [curse]?

Even though I received the doctor's diagnosis yesterday, it didn't necessarily give me peace of mind. That's because Gift was a rare genius, and the true nature of the black fog was never discovered in the end.

I gasped, springing up from the bed.

(Wolf!)

I'm worried that Wolf had exposed himself to the black fog when he shielded me.

I went to the male dormitory in hot haste, but, I wasn't able to meet with Wolf in the end. He, himself, firmly refused to meet with me, after all.

Chapter 17

(Shade's POV)

Turning her head after being called “Elder Sister”, Lycoris wore a slightly anxious expression when she saw my face. Only when I’d smiled, did a slight, almost non-existent smile creep up the corners of her mouth in small relief.

It’s an appearance that must never be shown to the likes of those guys in my class who’ve commonly treated her like a flower on a cliff.

Even though my sister was going in and out of the female dormitory’s medical office with the reason being that she was in poor health, every time I’d return to the male dormitory, my friends would keep pestering me with a “how is she?” to no end.

I feel like I should be the one pressing someone for answers. Like, “what the heck is going on right now?”.

It’s only hearsay, but based on what Miss Liliun had apparently said, the order of events which occurred in these past few days, went like this.

The day Art harassed her, Liliun chased after the bird. She’d said that, while chasing after the blue shadow, her feet took her to the guest house, and then, she moved further and further underground. If she considered the bigger picture, this would’ve been the moment she realized that there was something strange, but by then, she might have already been under some sort of spell. ⁽¹⁾

About this blue bird, it seems like it’s a kind of probing magic that the lunatic continued casting even while he was practically unconscious, this was according to the guest house’s librarian assigned as the watchdog, Mr. Hemlock.

In any case, when Liliun chased after it, it purposely led her to the innermost part of the basement. When the bird came crashing down, having used up its power, Liliun directed all the healing magic she had on it, which resulted in the revival of that sleeping lunatic. From that moment on, the madman began using Liliun’s eyes to view the outside world.

What happened after that had some conjectures mixed in, but it likely went like this.

When that guy, who seemed to be crazy about Miss Liliun, awoke, he immediately took action. It seems like the guy was some sort of genius in magic. Not only mind magic, but even wind magic was up in his forte. He likely used a mind manipulation magic on Art to make him fall down the stairs. As for Art's entourage, if you look at it from the lunatic's perspective, they'd been caught red-handed. With no room to argue, glass shards poured over their heads.

On top of all that, he was even *courteous* enough to fire off magic at someone's sister in place of a greeting before he left.

Be it day or night, Lycoris was tormented by nightmares — Wolf was too, but that's besides the point...

When she slept, without fail, she'd see dreams that condensed all her fears and insecurities. This was already on the same level as a mind attack. Since this spell wasn't information inside the magic system owned by the association, no one knew how to deal with it.

It seems like my sister had turned to strongly fearing the things she was dreaming of. As a result, during these two days in reality, her condition was visibly poor and her mind was unstable.

Of course, even the school couldn't afford to just fold their arms and watch, but they couldn't come up with a substantially effective measure against it.

On the same day that Gift – the lunatic – appeared, it seems that several people, including Mr. Hemlock, had gone down to the guest house's basement. What they saw there was the black fog that attacked Lycoris and Wolf. They've been going back again and again, and were at their wits' end with it.

The black fog seemed to have also begun causing a considerable influence inside the school. Maybe thanks to my aptitude in mind magic, I still haven't shown any signs of it, but be that as it may, I could feel unrest in the air through my skin. Fights, while trivial, were becoming frequent in the male dormitory. Although they were brought up as young masters from well-to-do families, it wasn't strange for quarrels to happen when men around my age assemble. Nevertheless, the frequency of commotions today

had been abnormal.

Although they haven't shown as much remarkable symptoms as Lycoris and Wolf, I don't know what will happen in the future. Perhaps in the end, it would be an epidemic of nightmares.

For now, Art, who was known to be synonymous to the [source of mayhem], had to be tied down, even if it was to the bed.

"Shade, how's Lily?"

On top of the bed with her back supported by the cushion, Lycoris inquired.

"It's useless. It looks like she still hasn't woken up"

Right after Lilium had spoken about the situation, she fell into a coma, as if having used up all her strength.

I don't have the heart to say this in front of my sister, but from the words that lunatic left behind, I'm guessing that until the very day the madman from the basement comes for her, she'll likely continue sleeping.

"I see. But Lily isn't seeing nightmares, right?"

Her voice was so anxious that I couldn't make myself reply with something like, 'if you're so worried, go take a look yourself'.

"She's fine. By the way, Elder Sister. I've applied for you to recuperate from home today"

Even when I informed her of what I did without consulting with her even once, Lycoris's reaction was dull. Since it was out of character of her to be so out of it, this simply made me more uneasy.

"...Eh?"

"Even if you stay here in that condition, you wouldn't be of any use, right? At any rate, it's better for you to be away from the academy right now"

With a lecture that was just a little stern, those black eyes clouded.

Please stop it. Honestly, I'm begging you, please stop it.

"Seems like Duke Lilia will come pick you up himself. You've had him worried"

"Father will...?"

Now that I've hit her weak spot, I finally got her attention, so I felt relieved.

"Will you... also go home with me?"

"I won't. I'm sort of a prefect, so I have work to do at times like these"

"I'm... the dormitory head"

"The management of the dormitory is basically the prefect's work. Since the dormitory head's work is pretty much to lie back and relax, it doesn't matter whether you're here or not"

"...I wonder what Wolf would do"

That... was the source of many headaches.

It had been only yesterday when Elder Sister cried to me saying [Wolf won't meet with me].

Not fully grasping the situation since I had just gotten up, I grumbled to myself wondering why I had to act like some sort of messenger for these two while I took my sister along to see Wolf, who was usually hanging around the training fields early in the morning.

Since Wolf had a bad habit of simply working out on the training fields whenever he was angry, I did wonder whether something had happened. But, the complexity of the situation had far exceeded my expectations.

To start with, as soon as Wolf saw that I was followed by my sister, he glared at me

with a brutal look that was all but ready to kill. Coupled with a terrible complexion, it was an incredibly evil expression.

Although I didn't know what had happened, when I looked at Lycoris's face, it made me wonder whether it cheered her up, but even then, strangely enough, my sister kept her distance and didn't really approach Wolf.

After seeing my sister's behaviour, Wolf's expression became increasingly steely, and this, conversely, made my sister wither even further. I've been with these two for along time, but this is the first time I've seen the two fall into a vicious cycle. It's a different matter if it were the opposite.

Since that was how I felt, even though I was only a bystander, I wonder just how bewildered the actual people felt.

Finally, Wolf, who looked like he was putting up with a great deal of pain, uttered these words.

[...sorry, Lycoris. Please don't come to me. Right now, I'll... likely only hurt you]

While uttering those words, he stared at Lycoris with a burning gaze. Since he was making excessively sparkly eyes, if the situation had permitted it, I'd have joked around like usual saying, [if you're that frustrated, then just sleep with a girl or something], but, well, I'm glad I didn't say that.

For the time being, before Wolf could say anything else that would hurt Lycoris even more, I pulled her hands and turned back. Of course, the gaze piercing my back had been very painful.

After that, Lycoris hadn't said anything about wanting to meet Wolf. Since the actual people hadn't said anything about what they were seeing in their nightmares, I could only try to guess, but from the state Lycoris was in, her dream was probably related to Wolf.

"At any rate, please get plenty of rest at home, Elder Sister. I'll try to deal with it till then. If it comes down to it, Wolf will sleep if I hit him hard in the head with a blunt object, anyway. As for Miss Liliu... I don't know whether she'll wake up with a

prince's kiss, but I'll try it out"

"...are you okay, Shade?"

Without even scolding me for the inappropriate words, Lycoris anxiously looked up at me.

"Really, you lost your cuteness as you grew taller... your inappropriate jokes grow worse when you're driven to a wall, right?"

With a gentle smile creeping up the corners of her mouth like a surprise attack, I couldn't bear to look down.

"...for now, please prepare to go home"

Saying only that, I drove my sister away from the medical office.



I resisted the reckless urge to hit a wall.

I don't care whether he's a lunatic or a mummy, but, selfishly involving my sister in his love affair was no joke.

I don't know whether the choice to make Lycoris go home was the right one. Wolf's nightmare was certainly a dream about her. If she's separated from him, his mental state will likely only get worse.

Even then, this was the only way I could help her right now, even if it's just a second quicker, I want to pull her out of this chaos. If she's with her father, then even Elder Sister should feel a little at ease.

If someday, even I start seeing nightmares...

It'll surely be a nightmare of my own powerlessness.

Chapter 18

Wolf told me something like ‘I’ll only hurt you, so don’t come near me’.

The words, [It’s okay even if I get hurt, I want to be by your side], were at the tip of my tongue. But I didn’t say them in the end.

I mean, Wolf was a person who’d always been by my side in order to protect me from harm.

They were also words that would betray the family who loved me.

Even so, maybe I should have said it.

If I did, maybe I would’ve been by Wolf’s side right now.

What would Lily do if it was her? I wanted to hear the answer to that. Even though I ought to know that now wasn’t the time for this, I found myself thinking of nothing but that. That’s because, she’s someone who... does the right thing, after all.

The answer that I’ll arrive at definitely won’t be the right one.

Soon, Father arrived at school.

I was actually a little afraid of seeing Father face-to-face. I’d been warned by him countless of times, scolded, and in the end, abandoned... aah, no, wrong. That... was in a dream.

Since he’s very sharp at subtle signs, I was terrified that Father might end up finding out about what I was seeing in my nightmares as well.

However, in reality, Father just gave me a very gentle smile and simply said ‘let’s go back home’. Maybe I relaxed since I was so happy, I dozed off and fell asleep in the carriage on our way home. As expected of course, a nightmare quickly followed after.

Even after we returned home, Father didn’t ask me anything.

He never asked me anything, but he did constantly check up on me while I was in bed. It was somewhat... a little funny.

“Father, what about work?”

I meant to be considerate of him, but my words caused Father to make a sad expression.

“...I’m sorry”

“No, you did nothing wrong. It’s just, whenever I think of the times you’ve said those words to me up til now, it makes me feel pathetic”

“Father, you aren’t pathetic”

“No, I am. Actually, Lycoris. Right now, I don’t know what kind of nightmares you’re facing. I don’t know what to do to help you”

Father made a somewhat helpless expression and took a seat at the edge of my bed. I’d thought that if it was Father, he’d be able to see through my mind without any problems, but that didn’t seem to be the case.

“I guess even you, Father, have people you don’t understand and get puzzled over, huh...”

After saying that, I was hit by a sudden overwhelming sense of déjà vu. I feel like I’ve said something like this to Father before.

That’s right, wasn’t it when we were talking about Uncle Narcissus? ⁽¹⁾

And, what on earth was it that Father had answered with?

I couldn’t distinctly recall the memory I should’ve been able to, but it was as if the mist somehow clouded it. Thankfully, however, Father continued on, giving me words that was like his response then.

“That’s natural. To begin with, since a very long time ago, I honestly had no idea what my daughter really wants or what she might think of me”

“Eh...?”

“Honestly, I’m a pathetic father. Since you were young, you’ve been a very mature child, you’d already learnt restraint before you could ask anything selfish of me. No, because I wasn’t by your side, I might not have even given you a chance to ask anything selfish”

“That... isn’t...”

I did build a mental wall against my father in the past. Not knowing my father, I did feel lonely and uneasy. Is Father saying he felt the same way?

At any rate, I had to tell him these next words no matter what, so I got up from bed and spoke.

“I don’t think you’re pathetic, Father. I mean, when I was at the Rankgerüste mansion, you rushed over, beat up Uncle Narcissus, and hugged me tight. I thought to myself, while I’m in your arms, nothing bad will happen”

Father slowly stretched his large hands around me, wrapping me in warmth.

How long has it been since Father hugged me? For a period in time when I enrolled into the academy, I think I’d been hugged each time I returned home. I should be way older now than I was then, but the sense of security hasn’t changed at all.

And so, this warmth sparked the little bit of courage left in me.

“Father. There’s something I wanted to ask you since long ago, but I never got to ask it”

“What is it?”

“...Father, did you ever love Mother?”

Upon my words, Father seemed incredibly surprised.

“Why do you ask something like that?... Did someone say something to you?”

“It’s already been a long time ago... but, Uncle Narcissus did tell me something”

“Narcissus?”

There was a sharp edge to Father's tone that I shivered a little.

"Aah, I'm sorry. I'm not angry at you. But, I see, so it was Narcissus, huh..."

I felt a hint of agitation in Father's tone.

Subsequently after we took in Shade, Aunt and Crinum cut off all ties with Uncle Narcissus, and he was then fired from the job of managing the territory. Last I asked Father about him, I was simply told that he was in some foreign country.

"...well, that guy doesn't matter right now. [Did I ever love her?], you ask? That's not quite right"

Upon Father's words, my heart plummeted. As though to stop that, he hugged me tightly and said:

"...even to this day, I still love her"

He said in an earnest tone.

This was the first I've heard Father speak this way since I was born.

"The truth is, you might have needed a woman to replace your mother, and perhaps I should have had a second marriage. But I couldn't do it. My wife could only be her alone, I couldn't take anyone else, that's what I realized"

That's right. Father had all but brushed the numerous talks of a second wife aside. I should know, I've even seen it happen in person when I was with him.

"...but, I've heard that Mother was a very jealous person"

"She was a passionate woman. That's also what I loved about her"

'Really?', when I inclined my head questioningly, Father continued with a flustered smile.

"Her affection was like a burning flame. I'd certainly been a little concerned. Though it was because I wanted to continue being with her in peace for even longer. But even as she lay sick in bed, she never changed. Even in her last moments, she was still the same"

“...was she a lovely person?”

“Yeah, she was. It was a wonderful love. That’s why that love was able to produce the most wonderful gem of all – you”

When Father proudly proclaimed those words, I felt as if the mist cleared away in front of my eyes.

“I don’t know what Narcissus told you. But, you can just ignore what he said. It doesn’t matter what others thought of our love... Oh, that’s right. I have something nice to show you”

After he said that, Father rushed out of the room and quickly came back, holding something covered in cloth.

“This is what I wanted to show you, but as I thought, it’s still a little embarrassing”

Bashfully saying so, Father uncovered the cloth, and what came to sight was a single painting.

It was a painting of a smiling woman holding a small baby in her arms.

“I... painted this”

“Eh?”

“This girl is you. When you were just born”

Then... could the person holding the baby in her arms be... my Mother?

Although the painting might not be what you’d call skillful, the woman had been drawn with a gentle touch. Sure, she had black hair. Black eyes. But her expression was quite different to the one I’ve seen in other paintings of my mother.

Her expression was brimming with nothing but affection. With her cheeks pressed closely to the baby she was holding in her arms, it looked as if she was showing off the baby to whoever was looking.

“Your mother was shy of strangers. Whenever she was asked to have a painting made of her, she’d somehow make a stiff expression every time. I should’ve shown this to you sooner. It’s just... this... is really embarrassing, isn’t it? But, this expression of hers in particular, was a look that only I could draw. She didn’t show this expression to anyone else but me, her...”

Hanging his head down, it seemed as if Father was holding back his tears. When I saw Father this way, when I saw the painting, I understood perfectly. That the mother I saw in my nightmares was nothing more than a figment of my imagination.

I suppose it was an imitation made from a blend of both Uncle Narcissus’s words and my own insecurities.

My heart swelled, feeling sorry for Mother. What plagued me was not Mother’s blood or anything of that sort. It was simply my fears and insecurities alone.

“...it must be painful to lose someone you love. But even then, Father, did you ever regret loving Mother?”

“Never. Even though I wish I’d had more time with her, I never regretted anything”

“Do you think I’ll be able to love like that?”

“Of course. You’re our daughter after all”

Father’s wore a look that seemed to wonder why I was even asking something as obvious as that.

And so, with a push on my back, I strengthened my resolve.

“...Father, I want to go back to the academy. I have to go back”

Father looking intently into my eyes for a while, but he eventually gave up and smiled indulgently at me.

“...I see. Then, in the meantime, sleep properly until the flush comes back to your cheeks. While you’re sleeping, I’ll prepare the souvenirs you’ll bring to school”

“??”

“Sweet dreams, Lycoris”

Unable to overcome the lull of the futon and his gentle voice, I went to sleep all too quickly.

I didn't see even a single dream, it had been a very deep slumber.

Author's note:

An absolutely disquieting tidbit: though her father's artistic taste are clear in the story now, there are plenty of people in the Duke Lilia bloodline who can draw well. Uncle Narcissus is one such person, his room is filled with many, many (endless) pictures of his beloved grandmother's figure and face, with her eyes the only thing colored.

Chapter 19

The sun was just about to set when I, who'd remained asleep for nearly the entire day, returned to the academy with Father.

The one who came to greet us was Shade. He put on an expression as if nothing was wrong, but fatigue was evidently showing from the corners of his eyes. He probably had it tough with the matters at school, and I might've worried him quite a lot too.

When Shade saw my face, he smiled as if letting out a breath he was holding in.

"You're looking a little better"

"Sorry, Shade, I've been a burden to you"

"...what commendable words when you're going to neglect your brother after this and head off to your fiance"

Shade made a wry smile but discussed Wolf with me and Father along the way.

He told us that Wolf had now secluded himself in his own room and wasn't even eating his meals.

There had been talks to send Wolf back home to recuperate like I did, but it seems the person himself firmly declined.

Wolf extremely despised exposing his weak side in front of his father, the Duke Ranunculus. I'm sure his relationship with his father wasn't bad, but I sometimes wonder even if it wasn't strained. The relationship between a father and a son, as I imagine, might be different from the relationship I had with my father, though.

At times, I've tried telling Wolf that if he'd act spoiled now and then, it would even make the duke happy. But Wolf would simply make a wry smile and tell me, "maybe, but it's pretty difficult".

There isn't anything that comes to mind when talking about Wolf's weak points, but if

I had to think of one, it would be that he was no good at being spoiled.

I stared at the door to Wolf's room and thought. Even now, he was fighting the nightmares alone inside this room without asking anyone for help.

"Well, I'll be talking to him for a bit"

After informing my father and brother with a deliberately light tone, I placed a hand on the knob with the tray that held liquid food and water that I'd taken from the kitchen on my left hand.

Wolf's room was as silent as a grave.

When I closed the door behind me, the sound reverberated across the room very loudly.

Then, it turned dark.

Rather than saying it's because the sun was setting, it's because the heavy curtains were obstructing the bright light that was still coming from outside completely.

Only the light from a small magical lamp was evident in the dark room.

Did he forget to put the lamp under the sun at noon? The light was almost used up and was barely lighting the room.

Wolf was on top of his bed. The futon had ended up falling to the floor, but that didn't bother me. What concerned me was that Wolf remained quietly lying on top of the terribly wrinkled sheets. Because his eyes were concealed under both hands, I can't tell the expression on his face.

"...Wolf?"

When I called out to him, his arms jolted a little. It seemed he wasn't asleep.

"Uhm, sorry to barge in without permission. But I have something I wanted to talk to you about..."

For a short time, there was silence.

Taking advantage of the fact that he didn't start blaming me about what happened, I edged closer to his bed, bit by bit.

When I came close enough, I found Wolf gasping in pain. I set the tray on top of the waist-high drawer I spotted when my eyes got a little used to the darkness.

"Wolf, I brought along water and food. First, have some wate..."

My words were interrupted by an arm that sluggishly reached out to grab my wrist.

"Did you... come back for me, Lycoris?"

It was painful to hear the horrible crack in his voice. But, I'm happy to hear his voice all the same.

"Yeah. I got back just a little while ago"

When I answered, I peeked into Wolf's eyes. But, his blue-violet eyes seemed somewhat unfocused that I was having doubts whether he was even paying attention.

"...Wolf?"

Right in front of the puzzled me, Wolf's expression twisted.

Not only did the corner of his mouth lift up in a cynical smile, a dangerous glint also appeared in his eyes, it was an expression I couldn't imagine on Wolf. I ended up being pinned down by the piercing gaze of those vivid blue-violet eyes.

"And so? Who on earth will the person you love be this time?"

I only drew back after he said this because I'd been surprised. That's all.

But Wolf, as if telling me he wasn't going to let me run away, pulled my wrist with enough strength as to be painful. I was dragged along and ended up getting thrown on top of the bed.

Locking me in place on the bed, Wolf's expression twisted yet again. This time, he grimaced in pain, and as if he was squeezing the words out of his lips, he pleaded with

me.

“...please don’t say it. I’m begging you... please don’t make me go insane”

He said it in a tone that made my heart ache.

“No more... being cast aside by you, going insane from jealousy then killing them... making you hate me because of that, making you cry... Being forsaken by Father... I can’t take it anymore. I don’t want to lose you... I’m begging you...”

“It was just a dream, Wolf”

When I touched his cheeks with the hand that he wasn’t holding on to, Wolf instantly opened his eyes as if startled.

“...that maybe so. But, they weren’t just dreams”

“What do you mean?”

It doesn’t look like Wolf was talking entirely in his sleep.

He may have been shifting back and forth between his dreams and reality that he could no longer tell the difference. For now, at least, he was talking with the closest he had to awareness. As testament to that, his blue-violet eyes were locked into mine.

“When I destroyed everything there... even though it was supposed to be a nightmare, I felt relieved inside the dream. I had no way to change your mind anymore”

“What you want inside a dream doesn’t reflect what you actually want. They’re just nightmares that embody the things you’re frightened of”

“It would’ve been okay if that’s all the nightmares were about”

Wolf’s words were contrary to my expectations.

“What truly frightens me... What these nightmares are showing me... is that I might not be able to stop myself from hurting you for real”

“...eh?”

“Even after I woke up, I kept thinking. After this, you’ll debut into high society. Even if it’s you, once you’re there, you’ll clearly realize enough not to misunderstand what others feel about you. You’re a desirable woman. You can have your pick of other men. Then, when you come to your senses, you’ll end up leaving me. If that’s going to happen, then...”

Wolf’s hands, this time, gently reached out to my neck.

Those blue-violet eyes captured me. That earnest look was an expression that I knew to be Wolf’s. I knew, at this moment, he was himself.

“...I’d rather kill you now”

Surprised as I was, in front of me, as if his own words surprised him, tears rolled and spilled out from those blue-violet eyes.

Was it strange to say that when I heard those words and saw his tears, I felt warmth brimming in my chest?

At this moment, I could no longer talk my way out of thinking about how dear Wolf was to me. Even when he was strong, even when he was weak, even when he was suffering, and even when he was loving someone.

That’s why I smiled at Wolf, in order to relay these feelings as much as I could.

“It’s okay. There’s nothing to be afraid of. After all, there’s now way you’d ever hurt me, Wolf”

Taking the big hands that were merely holding on to my neck, I pressed them against my cheeks.

“I know for sure that Wolf really, reaaally loves me... I do too, I like you, you know. I like you very, very much. I love you. That’s why it’s fine if you act a little spoiled with me”

Overcome with surprise, Wolf didn’t say anything to me, even after a while.

My face rapidly reddened, maybe it was because I was being overly self-conscious, but

the words made an echo in my head.

Before I could cry out with a “Anything is fine, just say something!”, Wolf whispered fervently in my ear.

“I love you... I’m not letting go again, so, be prepared”

Just like that, Wolf embraced me, sending me to my wits’ end.

I could hear the palpitating sound of my heart thumping loudly, and I don’t mean the circulation of my blood was getting cut off, it was more of, while late, I finally realized the situation we were in: two people on top of a bed.

Wolf wears his usual getup even when brandishing a sword on the training field, so this was a rare casual wear for him. With his sleeves rolled up, two buttons unfastened from his shirt, I can feel his body heat. That wasn’t all there was, there was also the sound of rustling clothes and his fervent breaths.

Although I’d always thought of them as just [Wolf’s hands] up till now, I became keenly aware of their body heat just now. Big hands crawled down my lower back, then his rough skin which had formed from handling swords, touched my skin and gave me goosebumps.

I felt relieved when Wolf parted from me, but then, he buried his head on my neck and kissed it. Surprised and stunned, I ended up shouting.

“Hey – wait! Wolf!?”

Bam!, came Father, making the noise when he opened the door, then my younger brother rushed in and made the exact same frozen expression as my father.

As for Wolf, he fell asleep as if losing consciousness, just like that.

Chapter 20

Even when the possibility of other people coming into the room shot up, even as I squirmed my way out from under him, I wasn't able to wake Wolf halfway through his comatose sleep.

[We weren't pricking up our ears to listen in, you know. Or perhaps I should say... with the thick doors, we couldn't hear anything to start with. We simply got surprised by the scream...], when my little brother let the cat out of the bag, I eyed my father with suspicion as my father laughed to cover up his embarrassment, but, since I was sure I had them worried, I couldn't get angry at them.

Then, Father hurriedly ran away. I suppose his parting words that he had business with the school faculty was no lie, at least.

As for Shade, it seems like he planned to escort me until I reached the women's dormitory, so this also led him to walk briskly on.

"Shade, I think it would be better if you rest. You're looking a little pale"

"I'm a handsome fair-skinned young man by nature, you know"

"...yes, a handsome fair-skinned young man listening in with his ear pressed to the door, what a picture-perfect sight that turned out to be indeed"

Even though I replied back with words filled with sarcasm, for some reason, Shade pulled a happy-looking smile.

"I knew it... you're really tired, aren't you?"

I said it worriedly, actually really serious, but he replied "how rude" sounding somewhat lively.

"You really did get better, didn't you, Elder Sister?"

In the end, he said that sort of thing with a look that said [what a relief], so I ended up

at a loss for words.

Wolf also leaves me speechless from time to time by saying embarrassing things. But, this sort of honest attitude coming from Shade still left me wondering how I should respond to it in its own way.

“Uhm... I’m truly sorry for all the worry I caused this time...”

“It’s unlike you to apologise, so please stop”

Having been flatly cut off, I decided to change the topic.

“I wonder... how many do you think fell victim to nightmares in the end?”

“Who knows. Even if you trust my self-assessment of the situation, we can’t really tell the difference between those caused by magic to those that are simply just nightmares”

“Did you not see nightmares, Shade?”

“Yeah, the way I train is different, so it doesn’t affect me”

When I was about to reply back that training had nothing to do with anything, I realized Shade wasn’t looking in my direction. With his stubborn profile looking straight ahead, I felt uncomfortable for some reason.

“Hey, is that really the truth...?”

This time, he didn’t answer back. With Shade keeping silent altogether, I sighed.

Shade had seen a nightmare. But, in the current situation, it doesn’t seem like he’ll obediently tell me what his nightmare was about. Right now, it’s not evident enough to show in his physical condition, though.

“How stubborn”

Even my muttering was ignored.

If I compared Shade with Wolf, I think Shade still lets other people spoil him. But even

then, it's not like he asks me advice on just about everything. Maybe it had to do with his self-respect or maybe his pride as a man, I wager it was probably something along those lines.

Shade had ended up walking on at a brisk pace, so we were almost at the women's dormitory.

"Shade, do you have any questions for me?"

"Questions?"

"That's right. I am the first to conquer the nightmares, right? So, if you have any questions, I'll answer them for you"

"Then, let's hear it at least. What's the secret to overcoming the nightmares?"

Even though I wished he'd ask for my advice, he asked only for a foolproof way to beat the nightmares. Well, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. Nevertheless, I answered him in earnest.

"The thing is... it is love!"

Do~n.

Even though I'd say that it was pretty well said, would you believe it, after a pause, Shade had the audacity to clutch his stomach in laughter.

"Isn't it rude of you to start laughing!? I was being serious...!"

"I'm sorry, I'd been expecting it to be some kind of deeply profound words..."

He was trying to downplay it by putting on a docile expression, but he eventually burst out laughing after that.

"You're not making this any better, you know! "

"N-No... really, it's not like I'm complaining, you know. It's just... I was caught off guard..."

“...if you’re laughing that vigorously, then looks like you’re OK”

“That... might be so. I’m probably stronger than you’d expect. At any rate, I am your brother, after all”

When Shade finally stopped rolling over in laughter, a playboy smile deliberately graced his face.

“But just to be sure, please give me your love too, Elder Sister”

“What are you saying all of a sudden?”, I said with a snort.

“There’s no way I wouldn’t love my one and only precious little brother, right?”

Shade looked amazed at my declaration, then replied with a slightly bright expression.

“...I wonder about that”

Contrary to those dishonest words, his cheeks were a little red.

Naturally. Rather than from him feeling my love, the fact that he’d been rolling around in laughter earlier was more likely the cause of the reddening.

Resolving to have Shade go to see Father later, I headed to where Lily was.

I wasn’t heading to Lily’s own room, but rather, the female dormitory’s medical office.

The cause of her comatose state was a different nature to that of the black fog, so I heard they’ve been performing various medical treatments on her for the chance at recovery. Despite the fact that there should’ve been a way to wake her up if it was only a spell to induce sleep, even now, they still haven’t come up with a counter spell. Generally speaking, the non-standard quality of Gift’s magic made it very troublesome.

“But, her condition is a little off today”, remarked the medical office doctor.

“Did her condition get worse?”

I frantically inspected Lily’s countenance, but, there wasn’t any particular difference.

“No, quite the contrary. It looks like she’s gaining awareness. She’s responding to the ambient sounds”

When the doctor called out a “Liliam”, Lily’s eyelashes twitched several times in response to her call.

“Lily! Lily! Can you hear me?”

I raised my voice too, and this time, even though it was only lightly, her eyelids opened.

Then, Lily’s small hands reached out unsteadily to me as if asking for help, so I immediately took her hand in mine.

“Lily, you’ve finally come to”

“...Ly... coris?”

Lily’s verdure green eyes, though still in a daze, had certainly reflected me.

The medical office didn’t turn boisterous all of a sudden. It was good news that Lily had finally woken up, but if we don’t understand the cause, we still need to be wary for any movements from Gift.

Ultimately, it took time until we determined that there were no changes in the school. In this regard, since several students with sharp intuition have testified that [for the time being, the black fog hanging in the air was fading at the school], our theory held true.

The damage of the black fog was mainly having me, Wolf, as well as the others, see nightmares, it seems like students complaining about not feeling well had been plenty. There was a sharp distinction between Lily’s symptoms and ours, but the theory was that the cause of her coma was also the black fog.

In other words, with Wolf and I, the main victims, overcoming that fog, we surmised that since the magic effects on our bodies were fading away, Lily would probably be waking up as well.

They say that even the fog that had been blocking the path to the guest house’s basement was fading away. That is, they say that Gift lost the barrier that had been

blocking others from trespassing.

I don't know what he's going to unleash next time, but one thing's for sure, if he remains left alone in the school, he will continue to pose a threat to the public.

I dare say, it'll probably turn into offensive attacks from here on.

Chapter 21

(Lily's POV)

That place had been a very peaceful place.

Without seeing anyone, without hearing anyone, there wasn't anyone to bother me. In here, there wasn't anyone who'd hurt me.

But, when she called out my name, "Lily", I realized that that place was an incredibly lonely place.

When I took her hand, I realized that that place had been an incredibly cold place.

When I saw her eyes turn from a look of worry to a look that sparkled with happiness, I realized, nothing in there had touched my heart.

When I woke up, surprisingly enough, several days had passed, so I was attacked by a wave of unease and frustration. After listening to what had happened when I was asleep, I learned that although they knew about the main culprit, they couldn't do anything about the situation.

That was why the proposal from Duke Lilia was truly a godsend for me.

That person turned up around the time the hustle and bustle around me calmed down after I woke up at the medical office.

When that person — Lycoris's father — appeared from behind the school chairman, someone who I've only seen once upon entering the school, I ended up distraught with the misunderstanding that someone had finally turned up to convict me.

But, the truth of the matter was, Duke Lilia had come to me to offer a proposal.

To start with, the duke introduced himself, saying that he was here by the will of His Majesty the King. Then, upon seeing me tremble at that, spoke gently to soothe me.

“You are a student under the protection of the school, for the current issue, many of us believe that you are the victim. Now, what I’m about to say is a proposal and not an order. You have the right to refuse, so I’d like you to listen with peace of mind”

Even so, my body trembled in dread.

“...it’s alright. I won’t say that you did nothing wrong, but bearing the consequences of a child’s mistakes is the duty of an adult”

All of a sudden, it dawned on me, ‘the person in front of me was no doubt Lycoris’s father’, I thought. With that, like a charm, my fear faded away. I nodded many times over, and this time, steeled myself so as not to miss a word of what the duke had to say.

For one, reviving Gift with healing magic had been understood to be done not out of my free will.

For another, keeping my meeting with Gift a secret after that was deemed a cause in making the situation more serious, although it wasn’t really a crime.

And finally, he told me that there were circumstances that deemed me a danger to the school– and consequently, to the country and the association. The duke explained everything to me while also mixing in explanations of the organization, including the setup on how the association operates under the country’s contributions.

The specifics of why I was treated as a danger was, of course, due to the suspicion of being someone who communicated with Gift in secret. And for the possibility that my magic itself would induce a situation like this in the future.

“You might as well think that the present situation is largely disadvantageous for you. So I want to give a proposal on top of that. Would you accept the responsibility of going to the basement of the guest house to seal Gift Assis once more? The suspicion that you’re an accomplice would be wiped off with that and it can also display your usefulness. Of course, we’ll be doing everything we can to help you”

It took me a little while to realize that he was referring to that Gift. I didn’t know Gift’s family name, and it never occurred to me that he would have something like that.

“You’re asking me... to seal Gift? Not kill him?”

“That’s right”

I don’t know the true intentions of the straight-faced duke, but the decision was probably the conclusion reached by both the country and the school, at least.

“But, can I really do something like seal Gift?”

“There is a way. And, you’re the most qualified to do it –”

Once the duke finished explaining the method, my answer was decided.

“...Okay. I’ll... do it “

Waiting was more dangerous than not knowing what Gift had in store for us next. So after going through the minimal amount of preparations, we headed down the basement.

Further, and further down. To where it felt cold and damp. It was already plain to tell, but the journey had been very unpleasant.

The first time I came here, I didn’t even have the luxury to think about anything, I had only single-mindedly chased after the little bird.

The second time after that, I passed through here while under the little bird’s guidance. When Gift first met me, I’d been someone who’d been forced to live in misery because of my own powerful magic. Him being a [comrade] in a sense, I had been quite delighted.

It’ll only sound like an excuse now, but maybe I’d been under Gift’s magic then, just as I suspected. After all, I didn’t consider this journey, which seemed as if I was passing through an abyss, to be terrifying then, and now that things have come to pass, it’s baffling why it never occurred to me to report his existence to the school.

And now, accepting guidance from the older teachers of the school, I paid a great deal of care so as not to miss my footing while my trembling feet carried me down the stairs.

It was quite unexpected, but Duke Lilia, who became my travel companion, was looking after me so I wouldn’t fall down. Those teachers of the school, as if protecting

the front and back, had proceeded along with magical lamps in hand while being vigilant to the area.

Having never imagined that the duke himself would accompany me, I was flustered at first, but even within this group, he was the most composed. Even when the journey was causing an optical illusion that seemed to continue on for eternity because the information my eyes were receiving was too little, it didn't seem to affect him.

Soon after, our party arrived at the deepest interior of the basement — to where Gift was.

There wasn't a trace of the black fog that had once enshrouded us in that place, when we opened the door, Gift's ghost-like figure was there. Since his real body was contained inside the coffin-like box, I was greeted by the sight of the semi-translucent Gift standing by its side. The usual scene I see.

He stared quietly at me, who'd brought in travelling companions. I think Gift realized a lot of things from it, but he didn't avert his gaze from me.

I suspect my captivation with this direct gaze was perhaps due to the work of manipulation magic. Although the most prominent of his features was probably his vivid blue hair, his deep green eyes that seemed to project the darkness was what attracted me the most.

Even as I approached him, clad in a protection spell cast by the teachers, Gift never showed a hostile response. 'He no longer has that power', I thought. Although I can't be negligent, Gift's figure was more transparent than before, tenuously, I felt it wouldn't be strange even if he disappears at any moment.

[...why are you assisting them? Is it because that woman is there?]

Although he spoke in a [voice] that, as always, didn't come from his throat, I did not answer.

Gift continued on, convinced about my feelings.

[Why do you trust someone who's so different from you? Don't you hate her? That woman has everything you've ever longed for. A lover, a family, a safe position, everything you've desperately wanted – she has it as if it's only a matter of fact]

Gift knew my heart in detail, he knew my weaknesses and knew about the jealousy and envy.

But, I understood now. His manipulative words were, in the end, his own personal opinion, it wasn't always the truth. Although he and I had similarities, there was an aspect that was crucially different.

"...you would never have tried taking the hand that was offered to you, would you?"

[What?]

"That's the key difference between you and me. I know the warmth of that hand now. That's why, rather than turning her away, rather than being jealous, I don't want to lose her, I just want to hold on"

Gift had tried satisfying it. The unquenchable thirst of mine. Indeed, that was something I'd longed for once.

The insecurity that I'd someday be abandoned was always kept inside me. Just as how my mother had abandoned me, just as my friends had abandoned me, I started to think, 'won't they all eventually grow distant and abandon me?'

And, while being forced to live without even a single person to talk to by my father, I'd felt that intensely torturous sense of isolation.

I'd wanted to be someone who'd never spare time to suffer through that insecurity. I wanted to be strong enough so that no one could control me. For that, I didn't care whether I'd end up losing myself. That was what I'd thought. But...

Making up my mind, I gripped the pendant on my chest, then took out a dagger from my breast pocket.

The hilt was undecorated, and it's thin blade ran half as long as my arm. With that nondescript dagger, it was unlikely to pose a threat to the ghost-like Gift. But when I flooded it with magic, a pattern on the crystal-clear blade gradually spread.

Feeling an impending crisis, Gift placed distance from me, but to begin with, this magical tool was not meant to stab someone. Carrying the dagger in my right hand to

hold it up, I invoked my magic.

[This is...]

Something invisible was gradually receding from Gift's body. Mysteriously, I could tell this quite clearly.

I was putting to use the only magic I could – healing magic. And, the magical tool I had on hand was a treasure of the royal family endowed with the power of [retrogression].
(1)

The very person who lent this to me — the duke – was cautiously observing Gift. The teachers as well, expanded the barrier and prepared for Gift's final resistance.

But Gift, as if he was only puzzled, stared intently at my eyes, and maybe there, he discovered my firm dismissal.

[Even *you* are rejecting me?]

It's not as if I didn't feel anything when I heard his words, heavy with dejection and despair. But, I've made up my mind.

"I don't mind even if you blame me for being disloyal. But, I did tell you. — If you hurt Lycoris, I won't forgive you"

With my left hand, I gripped the pendant on my chest a second time.

The pendant had been passed down from my grandmother to my mother, and then, from my mother to me. When I was young, before I got my power, it was proof that I was definitely loved.

Whenever I held this pendant tightly, I used to picture what my mother's face looked like when she'd given it to me. I would imagine her wearing a gentle expression. I would imagine that my mother, who was a little younger in my memory, had on an expression that was vivid and bright. And, I would imagine that she used to look at me with love in her eyes.

But now, when I gripped the pendant tightly, a different face floated in my mind.

With tears in her eyes... it was her face I saw.

When I talk about this pendant now, it was Lycoris's face I saw.

That person, not knowing who I was before I revealed my abilities, was completely different from me even by social standings.

But she believed in the beautiful dream I spoke of.

She worried for me. Even when she was involved in something terrifying because of me, she was happy when I recovered. She offered her hand to me.

When Gift tried to harm her, I made up my mind. I chose her over Gift. When I told him I wouldn't forgive him, it wasn't just something I said out of convenience to threaten him.

I won't allow Gift to harm her a second time.

"Goodbye. I will live without seeking you again. That's how I want it to be"

Just before he completely disappeared like the mist, he ultimately said something to me. Could it have been a parting farewell? The words of a curse? Or maybe, a declaration of love? Whatever it was, it dissolved in the air of the dark, dark basement before it could ever reach me.

And so, leaving the repairs of the barrier to the teachers, I returned to the school one step ahead.

When I headed above ground to where the brightness of the stars rained down, and out of the basement shut in darkness, the first thing my feet did was to carry me to Lycoris's room. It was already pretty late with it being past stipulated curfew. The corridors of the female dormitory were silent as the grave.

However, it seems like final year students and prefects could set their own time for when they'll sleep. Could she have already fallen asleep? Lightly, I knocked on the door. And, if she doesn't answer, I plan to turn back.

"...Yes, come in"

Although it wasn't loud, a clear answer came back immediately, so my heart pounded and leapt out.

"Please... excuse me"

Knowing the visitor was me, Lycoris's expression brightened with enthusiasm. That was just like her. Just how much had that cheered me up up to now, I wonder.

"Lily, how are you?"

"I should be asking you that, Lycoris. Will you be alright even without sleep? Don't tell me you're still..."

"That's not it. If anything, I'm not feeling sleepy since I slept a lot at home, "

"...then, is it alright if I talk to you?"

"Of course"

With Lycoris happily urging me to go in, I stepped into her room.

It was the first time I've entered this room. Since there was an unwritten law among the lower year students not to recklessly visit her room too much, students who've entered the dormitory head's room due to some errand, bragged about being able to enter.

If those students knew what I was doing right now, I wonder how they'd react. I'm kind of scared, but I'm also kind of looking forward to it a little.

It was impressive that Lycoris's room had a large bookshelf, but aside from that large furniture, the dormitory head's room was no different from a normal student's. However, the frame of the wall-mounted mirror had been elaborately decorated like a flower wreath, and the futon on top of the bed had been delicately embroidered. Moreover, since the room itself had an antique look, it was elegant.... was what I thought at first.

"...Lycoris, was this... a present from someone?"

Why I ended up asking and going as far as picking it up, was because it was too eye-

catching.

“Yeah, for some reason, I received it from a girl who left school last year. She’s a pretty skilled girl. It’s well-made, right?”

Certainly, you could say it’s well-made. Even the stitching was thorough, and the final touches were meticulous. But... why was Lycoris given this childish — to put it nicely – lovely patchwork quilt as a present? And... why was Lycoris using it as a pillow case without a doubt of any sort?

While thinking that way, I surveyed the room *very* carefully, and saw things that probably wasn’t her preference here and there. But, I could say, it was so like her to have a room filled with these things.

She was fundamentally big-hearted. Since she was a person who accepted various things, maybe that’s why there were people who were a little quirky flocking to her side.

When I stared intently at Lycoris, she tilted her head slightly at me as if asking [What’s wrong?]. At a glance, her almond eyes and the mole under her eye made her a sensuous beauty. The truth that she was full of openings was hidden under the facade that she was always on guard, if I hadn’t approached her, I wouldn’t have realized her charm.

I felt as if the weight on my shoulders was lifted.

I still needed a bit of courage to talk about my past. But, someday, I’d like her to hear it.

First... right. I had to apologise. For dragging her and her fiance into this, for exposing the school to danger.

Then, I’ll tell her what happened today. If I say that we ended up sealing Gift, she’ll probably be surprised at that. Although Duke Lilia smiled, saying [I wasn’t very useful, was I], it was very gentle and filled with good humor, if I said, “he’s just like you”, I wonder what response she’d make?

And then, if I can, I want to talk together with her about the future. Even after this, is it... still alright that I remain by your side?

(1) I'm guessing she is reversing the healing magic she previously used on him.

Chapter 22

It was the first early afternoon of the break after peace had returned to the school.

On the way back to the dorm, I observed the gentle sunlight that was filtering through the slowly swaying trees, in a daze.

Even though I said peace had returned, I can't very well say that anything and everything returned instantly to the way it was. It seemed several people, including me, had gone home after getting caught up in the riots inside the school that followed right after Art's injury. Thus, most had yet to return to school. Even if you try placing the blame on the families, it was only natural to keep their children at home out of worry.

Since they can't afford to resume classes in this situation, the school decided to take measures by temporary closing the school starting from tomorrow. In the meantime, the school head and the teachers would probably be going around, visiting the royal capital and the students' guardians to explain.

Even though I made a round trip back home, this and that were completely different situations. This time, we were certain to invite Lily to the house, so Shade and Lily will be going home with me, whereas Wolf will be meeting with us mid-way. My birthday was exactly the second day of the holiday, so we've arranged to have a private party among us. It looks like it's going to be a very enjoyable break, so I'm already very excited.

My heart was naturally bouncing when I thought of the holidays.

I could feel the refreshing breeze and the gentle sunlight that was filtered by the trees on my skin.

While resigning myself to the coming peace, I inadvertently thought about the [actual game].

(The game's time axis should be almost nearing its end)

What bore fruit from the path the heroine, Lily, pursued, was the route for the hidden chara- for Gift. Given that Lily didn't choose Gift in the end, she never reached the true ending. In other words, she approached an end that could probably be considered a "bad ending".

Although it's called a bad ending, it was the happiest ending for me, given that no one was killed in this timeline.

Of course, it doesn't necessarily mean that the credits will roll, so I don't know what will clearly happen. The possibility that Lily will open another route and fall in love with someone else after this wasn't entirely zero.

But, I think the game events, as far as what I know, should no longer happen, at least. If she falls in love based on developments I know, it wouldn't be consistent, unless whatever event has already happened. I was sure of that now.

It was this noon when Lily came to give me [certain information].

We were having a meal together out in the open, not caring about what anyone thought, ever since I took a 'so what' attitude on this. Wolf and Shade typically sit with us too, but it seems they've been busy since this morning.

Right now, the male dormitory was in the middle of a large-scale event called spring cleaning.

Performed only once a year in the female dormitory, room checks were done 4-5 times a year in the male dormitory, simply because of the occasional disturbances due to the dirty rooms that happen. I hear that the problem with the dirty rooms that gave rise to quarrels coincided with the recent disturbance of Gift's [curse], so now that everything has returned to normal, it seems it was an opportunity to make at least the students who were presently at school clean together. Even the male students will become desperate when they're told that the holidays will be put off if they don't finish cleaning.

In any case, after we exchange smiles that said "boys will be boys" and finished our lunch, Lily confided to me in secret.

"Lycoris, to tell you the truth, it seems I can use other magic aside from healing"

“Eh? Really?”

I thought that was splendid news, but Lily nodded with a slightly complicated look.

“There are still a lot of students who are scared of how strong my magical abilities are, so even the teachers told me to lie low for now...”

That was probably a wise decision. The school had given the explanation that someone else was the culprit for the recent affairs, but in spite of this, there were still those among the students who were frightened of Lily. There was likely no rationale for this sort of thing. We can only make them gradually understand through time.

“But, I’ll definitely use it to protect someone — to protect the people I cherish. If I continue to do so, I’m sure there will be more people who’ll accept me, and my powers”

Moved by that incredibly brave decision, I pulled her into a tight embrace.

Well, I felt touched at that time, so it didn’t even occur to me.

Or perhaps I should say, there was a big problem.

I’m sure that Lily was a genius in magic. She ended up making rapid progress and awakened something like offensive magic in a day. It would be different if that were all, but how far her magic potential will reach was still unknown.

When a yandere appears wielding a knife, it looks like the heroine will have a weapon with a far greater fire power, so to speak.

Or, if the yandere plays dirty, it looks like the heroine will end up easily seeing through the scheme to abduct and confine her.

It’s like the makings of a peerless heroine.

(The yandere game is defeated... But then, what does that mean for the game — or rather, for this world?)

Even though it was extremely alarming at how slowly I remembered things concerning Gift, now that the game’s time seems to be ending, I think I have probably

recalled almost everything about the game.

I considered other things on top of that. About this world. About the game. And, about the connection between this world and the game.

Since this world had a lot in common with the game, I thought that this world equaled the game world. If that's the case, why did this world have parts that were different from the game? A bug? If so, was my existence a massive bug?... it's not a very pleasant theory to think about.

Or, suppose a theory that this wasn't the game itself but, say, a world created with the game as a model?

But, if it had been [created], shouldn't there be a [creator]? And, was there a consciousness to that creator? If there was, what does it think about this world deviating slightly from the essence of the game?

(And if that's the case, did I overturn the fate set out for me by that creator?)

That was a very exaggerated and slightly scary theory to think about.

But, since I plan on living every moment as best as I can, I don't have any regrets.

Well, in any case, there was no evidence for these theories. It's my loss if I only worry about theories. But still...

It was at that moment when I was about to step into an endless reverie.

A suspicious figure crossed the tip of my vision.

Walking with a large package that seemed to be of great importance, was a lanky young boy — Oria.

I can't see Ru Xiang's dignified figure standing near him. As that exotic nobleman's guard and attendant in school, it was unusual to see Oria walking by himself. Intently holding onto the package wrapped in cloth, he seemed to be scanning his surroundings somewhat nervously.

It was suspicious that he was ignoring the paved brick road to walk under the shade

of the trees, like he was hiding something. I would've thought he was skipping town had I not known that the male dormitory was conducting spring cleaning.

Even if that wasn't the case, I felt a sense of distrust towards him. And with the reason being what it was, I couldn't discuss it with anyone.

That is, [because he didn't exist in the game for some reason], would be nonsense to anyone else.

Apart from that, Oria was a character worthy of favor. Even though he appeared a little timid to the younger people with a higher social status than him, he wasn't a bootlicker. Above all, he took the responsibility of being Ru Xiang's guard seriously.

Although he doesn't seem like a pretty dependable older man with his lanky build and mild-mannered demeanor, he attracted a certain popularity with women who preferred the gentle kind.

Actually, his gentle features were wasted by the moderately long, reddish-brown bangs that gave off a terribly gloomy impression.

I pulled myself together and tried to greet him with the friendliest smile I could muster.

"Hello, Oria"

"Hii!"

But, when my greeting alone was met with a strangled reply, my smile turned stiff.

"D-Dorm Head Lycoris! I-I'm sorry. I ended up being surprised..."

Oria apologized in a panic and was about to depart hastily with a "well then". Correcting his tight hold of the carefully covered package, he then twisted his body as if to keep it from my sight.

"...Wait"

I think preventing him from leaving was only natural.

Oria came to a stop with a pale expression that seemed as if he'd received the death

sentence or something and, in the end, replied:

“I’m... not... doing anything suspicious...”

His remark was as good as a confession. When he’s been acting suspiciously thus far, was there anyone who wouldn’t be suspicious?

“What is that package? Is it yours? Or, could it be Ru Xiang’s?”

The moment I mentioned Ru Xiang’s name, Oria’s shoulders gave a sudden jolt. This person was supposed to be twelve years older than me, but can he really last in society with him being this easy to read?

‘Now then’, I thought, folding my arms.

It would be a different matter if it was Wolf, the dorm head of the male dormitory, but I don’t have the authority to inspect Ru Xiang’s package. Still, it didn’t sit well with me to just let it pass. Which was why, I tried putting him off balance.

“That package looks heavy. I can give you a hand if you want”

“N-n-n-nonsense! I was charged to carry this alone, after all!”

“Oh my. When you say it like that, it kind of makes me curious about the contents “

“Eeeeeeeeeeh!?”

Every one of Oria’s reaction was loud.

“I wonder what’s inside?”

“T-t-t-that is... I’m afraid I can’t say! I-it’s just trash!”

“But, there’s a place to throw trash away in the male dormitory, isn’t there? I take it it’s something you have to throw away yourself?”

Oria was previously walking to the waste-collection point where the school’s garbage was consolidated. The times when students purposely go there to throw away trash was when it was maybe bulky, or when it was trash they didn’t want anyone knowing

about.

“This is, you see... huge trash, after all”

“Is that so?”

I scrutinized the [trash] wrapped in pitch-black cloth.

It was bumpy and protruding strangely under the cloth. I know that whatever it was, was oddly-shaped and solid to some extent. It was wrapped under layer upon layer of cloth, such that I couldn't discern the object inside.

“From the shape of it, I'm sure it's not a kind of book...”

“Please don't try to dig into it any furrtherrr”

Oria said it in a pretty miserable voice, then hastily pulled off his own jacket, turned his back on me, and crouched down. He spread his own jacket on top of the lawn and started to wrap the package with it.

It was just so desperate that I felt I had to stop, since even I felt like I was somehow bullying the weak.

It was at that moment when I took my eyes off of him.

Something fell from Oria's back and out into the open.

What I picked up almost reflexively seemed to be a black leather notebook.

The size was as big as a paperback book in modern day Japan.⁽¹⁾ However, it was thick enough that you could even block a sword with it. It seems the contents had been steadily filled in, I could feel the thickness, the more the leaves of the paper bent, bit by bit.

It's been used for a long time, but I could see it was used with great care.

“Oria, this fell...”

“UwaAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!”

Screaming as if a Doppler effect oscillating, Oria even abandoned the good manners he sort of preserved before then and tried to snatch the notebook from my hands.

I instinctively avoided it. It's not like I was planning not to return it to him. It was just that I was surprised and my reflexes were on the better side.

Before I could ask him to calm down a little, Oria planted his knees on the ground.

"Eh?"

"I'msorryimsorryimsorryimsorry....."

Although he probably didn't intend to do that, that appearance, where he curled his body as if to cling to my feet, was no doubt a [dogeza].

"Y-you're being scary, so please stop"

"Pleaseforgivemepleaseforgivemepleaseforgivemepleaseforgiveme....."

"W-what are you apologizing for?"

"I didn't mean anything bad! It was a passing fancy..."

I wasn't getting through to him.

"O-Oria, you were about to end up throwing an important package away, weren't you?"

Ru Xiang's package was left on the lawn wrapped in Oria's jacket. I half-begged him to get up, but Oria gave a mis-match reply.

"I-I'll hand this over! So please give it back to me without reading what's inside"

Oria tore off the package from his own jacket in one stroke, and pleaded with me while making sure to hold the bundle of black cloth reverently with both hands.

(What a fast change of heart...)

So, in other words, he didn't want his own secret(?) exposed, even at the expense of

his master's secret(?)?

Though I was bewildered, I was curious about what's inside the package for now. After exchanging the notebook with the package, I unraveled the tightly fixed knot around the cloth.

And then, I cautiously opened the large, thick cloth, that looked almost like a dark curtain.

My breath hitched the moment my eyes met with a white lump that inadvertently made an appearance from there.

“...!!”

It was as if the bright sunlight was receding only around me.
As if the freezing breath of midwinter was blowing only at me.

That was how I felt at that moment.

The thing that appeared from inside the cloth...
Was a slender, white [arm] that appeared to be a child's.

(1) 17×11 cm book

Chapter 23

When that [arm], which had been lopped off around 10cm from the wrist, tumbled down the thick cloth and out of my hands which were frozen in terror, though, it made a hard crashing sound.

“...i-it’s... a fake?”

“Yes. That’s right.”

I tried lightly poking the [arm] that tumbled down. The cool hard texture was no doubt porcelain. There wasn’t a speck of doubt, that though it had the appearance of white porcelain skin, this was only meant to resemble it.

I unravelled the baggage further to chase away the question that filled my mind.

It’s coming out, it’s coming out. There were a total of six arms in the end. Just like the first arm, the slenderness reminded me of a preadolescent young girl’s.

“Even I had a problems with it. To think, a man who’s approaching the later half of his teens would have a hobby like doll making”

“Doll... making...”

“I even thought he’d stop once he was old enough to enter school! But the art teacher told him something unnecessary like [This is art! You have to keep on making these by all means, I’ll do all I can to cooperate as well], so the situation got even worse!”

“I-in other words, this was... by Ru Xiang?”

“Yes!”

“As a hobby? Of making dolls?”

“Yes! My master’s hobbies are fantasizing about the girl he likes in his childhood and making dolls of her. Ah~ It’s awful when he makes me throw away the duds like this,

but also, more than that, when Dorm Head Wolfgang and Prefect Shade come to the rooms for business or so, I'm always on pins and needles, fearing the day they'll wind up seeing the doll room in the adjoining room. I'm sure at least an entire day of my lifespan gets cut down every time— “

As he chattered on while voicing his complaints, Oria's head suddenly lurched forward. I wondered whether he received a backhand chop from a tsukkomi without me knowing it, but that wasn't it, the object that assaulted Oria's head — a shoe which seemed to be a man's — landed on the lawn with a plop.

“R-Ru Xiang...”

Even without the shoe on his other foot, the black-haired beauty still managed to look elegant as he walked towards us.

He picked up the shoe on the lawn just as he was, dusted it off with a pit-a-pat, then wore it as if nothing had happened. When he did so, there was no longer anything that messed up his white, foreign-looking attire, and he stood with a regal air.

Not knowing what expression to show him, I looked down.

Based on what Oria said just now, in a portion of his room — there was usually one room provided in the dormitory, but it appears he somehow had two rooms to use. Since Ru Xiang clearly receives special treatment even though it was this school we're talking about, that's nothing to be surprised about now — Ru Xiang was decorating dolls as a hobby.

Moreover, Ru Xiang based the dolls on a girl he liked in his childhood.

As a person who was once born and raised in Japan, a world power for craftsmen, I have no intention of making fun of him for making dolls simply because he was a man. I do, in fact, consider things like hina dolls as art. However, the doll had a real-life model. Naturally, he most likely hadn't gotten the other person's consent.

If I had to say whether this was a SAFE or an OUT... I'd say it was probably a SAOT. ⁽¹⁾

I had known there was a scrupulous side in Ru Xiang, though. My honest impression was, 'He wound up going in *that* direction, huh?'. In the game, there hadn't been any mention of his hobby.

“Lycoris-sempai...”

Looking up when my name was called, I saw Ru Xiang’s handsome features warped into a sad expression. It had been a look that, had I been a woman that possessed maternal instincts, would’ve made me unconsciously think, ‘Stop, please don’t make that face’.

“You ended up hearing it, huh...”

“Y-yeah. Just a little, uhm...”

Ru Xiang lowered his hazy eyes in sadness. Tears were accumulating in his usually clear, black eyes.

His hand, which meekly hesitated as it reached out, covered mine pleadingly. That hand was trembling and a little cold.

“It’s okay even if you don’t try to understand. But if you could, please don’t hate me...”

.....Okay.

Well, it’s not like he plans to cause anyone trouble by concealing it from the person herself. If I compared him to the likes of Art, I probably wouldn’t be wrong even if I end up saying that Ru Xiang was a completely lovable junior.

When I repeatedly nodded my head with that in mind, Ru Xiang’s expression turned radiantly bright. A hint of red evidently flushed on his porcelain cheeks.

“Thank goodness. I can take this as you will never speak of this to anyone, right? Thank you very much”

–huh?

Did he just top it off with a relatively firm demand?

Although something there didn’t sit quite well with me, I didn’t plan to be a source for rumours, so I nodded my head once more.

“G-good for you, huh! Ru Xiang-sama!”

After watching in suspense as Ru Xiang and I spoke, Oria called out, sounding deeply moved.

With that beaming smile, you wouldn’t have believed that he was the servant who’d so readily given up his own master’s secret earlier.

Without replying to Oria’s words, Ru Xiang quickly drew close to Oria and wordlessly snatched the notebook from his hands.

“Ah—-!!”

Oria cried out, but Ru Xiang held out the notebook towards me without paying it any attention.

“As a reward for your kindness, please kindly accept it. If Senpai feels angry after seeing what’s inside, I don’t mind getting rid of this person for you in whichever way”

It appears Ru Xiang had been silently fuming.

While thinking of the two as a [like-minded pair of master and servant] in my mind, I gratefully accepted the notebook.

I was curious as to why handing over the notebook to me turned into a [reward for my kindness], but halfway through, I internally decided to [just let it be].

I opened it without taking it too seriously, no matter what was written in the notebook, it probably wouldn’t be as shocking as a person’s arm coming out from inside a wrapping.

The contents of the notebook were composed in a novel-like form.

Although it needed my concentration to read the tightly fitted words written in fine penmanship, I was quickly drawn to the composition.

The reason as to why, was because the story’s main character was named Liliam Valley.

Lilium– Lily, was admitted to the magical school, met a young man there, and fell in love. The hero's name was Wolfgang Eisenhut.

The contents of the novel had evidently been Wolf's route in the [actual game].

(1) SAFE or OUT or SAOT

SAFE means that it's appropriate material (Sfw); OUT means material that would be immediately deleted if posted (Nsfw), and SAOT is material with dubious content that clearly looks NSFW but are not deleted based on deletion criteria. When researching on the net on this, I ended up seeing a picture of a girl who was nearly naked, save for small pieces of cloth that helped to hide the you-know-what's.

Chapter 24

I felt as if my head was being physically swung around, but fortunately, the person I could hurl my questions at, was here right now.

“...Were you the one who wrote this, Oria?”

Oria tried to stubbornly keep silent and avert his eyes from me, but after he'd been persuaded (threatened?) by Ru Xiang who told him to “answer the question”, Oria hanged his head.

“Y-yes. That's right...”

“This... What on earth—”

I hesitated, unable to form the words I wanted to ask.

“Explain, Oria”

“E-err... in short, it's a novel. I used people in the academy as the models...”

It's obvious that wasn't all. There had to be a reason why it has a pretty obvious resemblance to my memories of the [actual game].

“Oria, do you have memories of a past life?”

“...eh?”

“No? Then, what on earth...”

“I(boku)... No, I(watashi), uhm, actually have a slightly unusual magical aptitude...”

“Magic? Then, don't tell me, you can tell people's [fate]?”

“??”

When Oria sent me a puzzled expression, I stared back with an expression that must've been awfully stiff.

“Fate? No, that kind of magic is...”

“But, you’re writing the knowledge you acquire through magic here, right?”

“Y-yes. That’s right”

“Isn’t this in other words [fate]? There might be various ways to call it, but isn’t this honestly what it should roughly be...?”

“N-no, an exaggeration like that is...”

“But...”

Hung up on a thought that came to mind, I must’ve lost my composure. Oria had gotten completely pressured by my intensity that seemed to press him hard for answers. Only after Ru Xiang stepped in, saying “Lycoris-sempai, may I bother you for a moment?”, did I finally realize this.

“Ah... I’m sorry”

“I don’t know why Sempai keeps calling the things written here as [fate]. But at the very least, the contents haven’t materialized right now. I feel it shouldn’t be called [fate]”

With Ru Xiang’s well-organized and gentle spoken words, I was able to calm down a little.

“Erhm, that’s probably, because I– no, uhm, because there’s someone who’s going against fate”

“But, is fate something that can be gone against? “

“.....I’m sorry. I got confused”

In fact, after I proceeded to read the notebook, my brain got awfully confused.

“Oria’s magic is seeing [possibilities] concerning a person’s life”

“Possibilities...?”

“Yes. It’s possible to mostly see the past and, at times, the future, but visions of the past and visions of the future are strictly different. The difference lies in seeing a number of varying possibilities. What Lycoris-sempai read was just one story written in the notebook. Please, try reading the next stories as well”

Under Ru Xiang’s prompting, I opened the notebook once more. Written next after Lily and Wolf’s story was... some kind of love story between me and Art. Even though I’d only skimmed through the story, that had been all I could bear to read of that.

“Eh? What is this”

A story like this was naturally not in the game. I attempted to go on reading the page after that and, this time, it was a story about my friendship with Lily... or, so I thought, the situation was looking ominous. At a scene where Lily was was going to kiss me, I closed the book and held my head.

“??????”

What I read was probably no less than a tenth of a page, but it packed quite the punch.

The notebook that has now been placed on my hands...

...was clearly at the top of [strange things] in my life so far. The notebook’s cover was a leather that could be found anywhere, but the part that hinted that the contents would be so confusing that it’d defy description, was nowhere to be found.

“Umm...”, the creator of this chaos raised his voice.

“I’m sorry. That is... I didn’t mean any harm! Somehow or the other, I felt bad that these poor unpicked possibilities would end up disappearing without a trace, so...!”

With his slender arms, Ru Xiang poked the back of the energetically explaining Oria with a thump.

“I’m sorry, it’s a hobby. It’s my hobby, I can’t get myself stop. The story between Dorm Head Wolfgang and Liliam-san is actually my favorite tragedy... And, the story between Arutad-san and Dorm Head Lycoris with a childish boy and an older onee-sama

seemed really nice... As for the story between Dorm Head Lycoris and Liliam-san, how do they put it – a “man’s fantasy”...?”

Once Oria was done talking about his excessively broad range of preferences like he’d been in a trance, he spoke with a somewhat faraway look.

“Since way back, it’s been my hobby to write down the stories that interest me when I see the [possibilities] of the surrounding people. Every time it’s found out, I’d get kicked out no matter how seriously I did my job and had to make work as a stray...”

“Please learn from your experiences already”

Oria had tears filling the corner of his eyes at my straight up retort, but he hadn’t said “I’ll do that, I’ll stop already”. This was hopeless.

“To begin with, isn’t this misuse of magic?”

“It might not seem like it, but he did get some kind of coaching from the association regarding his use of magic”

Ru Xiang wore a wry smile as he explained that Oria was allowed to use magic that only related to being Ru Xiang’s guard.

However, in Oria’s country of birth — which was a small country, different from Ru Xiang’s — there wasn’t an organization like the association or an institution like this academy. Because of that, it seems Oria had barely any control of his magic and invoking magic pretty often had nothing to do with his own will.

With his head hanging low like he was apologizing, Oria’s behavior seemed admirable at first glance, but I couldn’t quite gush forth a tolerant attitude when I consider the notebook’s existence which was sort of the [embodiment of chaos].

“...at any rate, what Oria sees are nothing but things that won’t happen in tandem, so even if they are [possibilities], it’s impossible for them to be all just one [fate]. Rather, if there had been a magical user who could accurately see the past or future, he wouldn’t be able to live with this much freedom, don’t you agree?”

“That’s true”, I thought, while feeling as though the string that I nearly had in my hands was gradually slipping away.

I'm acquainted with possibilities. I guess it's like knowing the events regarding a parallel world. Like, had Wolf lost his father in the poisoning incident, or had Shade been raised under the care of Uncle Narcissus, maybe Oria would've been able to learn about a world with such an incredibly frightening possibility by now.

I sort of understood his peculiar magic now. But it didn't become the key to solving my question [regarding the relationship of this world and the game] like I thought it would.

"...Oria, do words like [Yandere] or [PC games] ring a bell?"

"? No"

Since Oria, who shook his head with a care, showed interest, I tried giving a little explanation. The explanation itself regarding computers was difficult, so I put suitable emphasis on what yandere and games were. Explaining [Flag], [branches], or [multi-end] was difficult, but I used so called stories that branches out with choices as examples. ⁽¹⁾

It seems Oria had a strong imagination and somehow managed to understand, after hearing my explanation, his eyes gradually brightened up.

"Incredible! That seems pretty fun! The concept of [branches] is good! If that's the case, you can weave a lot of possibilities into one and differ from the usual novels! Even the thing you call [yandere] sounds awesome!"

It's wonderful that he seemed happy, but it doesn't seem like Oria knew about the [actual game].

Disappointed as I was, before me, Oria continued chattering on excitedly.

"I definitely want to be reborn in a world that has this [game]!! Then with all these possibilities, I'll incorporate the [yandere] into the [game] and make--"

The unrepentant Oria had been speaking while touting the notebook that he seemed to treasure when Ru Xiang nailed a splendid elbow strike at his servant's solar plexus.

And then I muttered, overcome with surprise.

“Re... born...?”

“Aah, is it not a too common concept in this country? In our country, we have the concept of reincarnation...”

Ru Xiang had kindly given me an explanation, but I knew that even without hearing it. If anything, I was a living testament to that.

That’s right.

There was reincarnation.

I can’t claim that I didn’t consider my example when Oria claimed the possibility that he’d be reborn on earth – in Japan.

In this regard, what’s to say that Oria won’t be reborn in Japan long before I died? I mean, there’s no guarantee that reincarnation will always follow the time axis. And, will Oria be the one to make the game by relying on his past life’s memories? Will I play it?

Was the resemblance of the events between the game and this world patterned from the knowledge he obtained with his own magic — in the style of a vision of the past, after all?

It’s as if someone whispered “That’s correct’, right then. At that exact moment, I recalled the title of the [actual game].

The game’s title was [Deja Vu].

Even though the word floated in my mind numerous times when I was young, I couldn’t connect it with the game’s title until this very moment.

Déjà vu. <*Kishikan*>.

Whose <*Kishikan*> was it referring to?

The accepted theory among fans was that the game was named after the game system wherein the player must keep playing numerous times to arrive at the happy end.

In the game, if, say, the first round had a tragedy that couldn't be avoided, in the second round, it could be avoided with a newly appearing choice. It was such a system that seemed as through a simple *deja vu* was coming to save the heroine's future.

The specification was unpopular with the users who preferred seeing only the happy endings, but I rather liked it. When you know the tragic, painful episodes, you'll be able to enjoy the happy endings more.

But the truth was...

[Deja Vu] was referring to the famed creator's *deja vu*. In other words, his past life's memories, perhaps?

Then, were the people in our world the originals and the game characters modelled after us?

It's preposterous.

There's no way to verify it.

But, there's no way to deny it either.

"...wouldn't you forget your past life if you're reborn?"

"Through will power! I'll remember!"

It's absurd.

But, based from my experience, you can recall past memories when you connect this life's knowledge with the past's. In my case, that knowledge had been [Wolf]. In Oria's case, what if that's when I was telling him about [PC games], [flag], or [Yandere] just now?

As I sank into silence, Oria seemed to have misunderstood somehow.

"Uhm, I'm sorry. I went overboard... Err... I hope you won't misunderstand me, but it's not like I thought, 'if reality was like this, it would be great'. I do like the [world of possibilities] that have different facets, but that's because I can more vividly understand the value of things I have in real life... I can't explain it properly, but..."

Oria shrank, looking a little insecure.

I understood a little of what he said. After all, I was happy right now. I had Wolf, Shade, Lily, and Father, and I knew about Mom's smiling face.

I could meet Duke Ranunculas whenever I wanted to. I got letters from Crinum and Aunt saying they were doing well, too.

It feels vividly clear to me that the value of what I have now was more prevalent when I think of what I didn't get. It's like when the game's happy ending looked lovelier after seeing the bad endings.

Finally, I could smile at Oria.

I don't know the answer. Just what I thought *might* be the answer. There's no way to really know for sure.

But there was one thing I can do. And that, was to live to the fullest.

⁽¹⁾ i.e. those 'Choose your adventure' books.

Epilogue

Let me tell a little bit about what happened after.

It appears the master and servant, Ru Xiang and Oria, who gave me an extra large surprise at the very last moment as a present, will be staying in the royal palace of our country for this break.

There's still a lot of things I want to talk to them about. I'm looking forward to seeing them again back at school.

Art was temporarily recuperating at home.

But what should be surprising was that it seems he left a letter of apology to Lily before heading home. The thing that had been shown to me was, sure enough, Art's handwriting. The content of which was about how he was giving a lot of thought about the current incident in his own way.

But then, this was how the last sentence on the letter went.

[Be sure to tell Lycoris that I'm reflecting really hard on it]

It would've been splendid had that not been there. But then when I think about Art up until this point, even if I can see only a tiny little speck of it, sending over the letter was already clearly progress.

Hitting Art with my fist as punishment may work rather well.

Lily will be indulging me by staying the entire part of this break at my home.

We'll cook meals, learn horse-riding, and go to Wolf's place to have fun together. Since our schedule was jam-packed, not even a single day will go to waste.

It seems Shade will be discussing many things about his future prospects with Father after returning home.

To be specific, whether or not Shade will be succeeding the position as Duke of Lilia.

Given that Father had already gone through pretty much all the necessary arrangements so Shade can choose either option, the rest was all up to Shade.

It might just be the older sister in me speaking, but I think Shade would be able to fulfill the duties of being the duke.

Wolf received a loving sermon from Duke Ranunculas immediately after returning home.

We couldn't rely on him during the incident with Gift, but I suspect it must have been painful for Duke Ranunculas. Such was the thing called parental love.

Wolf reported this to me in embarrassment so I think this sermon had shortened the distance between parent and child.

Once I finished getting dressed up, I kissed the picture of my mother which I placed on my bedside and stood up.

Deciding to kill time by wandering a bit, I dismissed my wet nurse and departed from my room.

Today's my birthday.

Since it was a sudden return to home, the party was modest. The participants were Lily, Shade, Father, and Wolf. Duke Ranunculas will be gracing us with his presence for a short moment as well. And my birthday gift from Crinum and Aunt had arrived this morning. The other presents from relatives and academy's students have arrived as well, but I intend to keep the pleasure of opening them up for later.

Right now, Shade, the party planner, ordered me to be on standby.

By chance, my feet led me to the direction of the library.

It was a place I spent a very long time in when I was young. Since it was a deeply intimate place for me, I wind up going there whenever I had the time to spare. Though, after entering the academy, I seldom had the time to visit the place, so the furniture and the like seemed considerably smaller than I remembered.

The top-most bookshelf that I used to never reach even when I stepped on a stool.

The ladder that I was banned from using because it was dangerous when I was young.

The gigantic dictionary that I'd had a tough time turning the pages of.

Now that I think about it, the me back then who furrowed her brows as she proceeded to read an obscure book with a desperate look, surrounded in this unique dusty odour, must've been a pretty lonely kid.

"Lycoris? Are you there?"

Hearing Father's voice from out the corridor, I rushed out of the library.

"I'm here, Father"

Catching sight of my appearance, Father's eyes grew wide with surprise.

"Lycoris!... you look absolutely adorable, my princess!"

Father's sweet words eradicated the insecurity I had at wearing a dress that was different from usual.

"Rather, you're more beautiful than adorable. You look stunning"

"Just like Mother?"

"Yes, that's right"

I placed a long gloved hand, that was closer to white than pink, on my father's arm as he wore a very tender smile on his face.

My attire today was a soft-lined dress with an antique pink theme. The colors matched well with each other, but for me, who'd worn nothing but black and rouge dresses, it was a huge venture. Since it wasn't a formal occasion, my hair wasn't tied up and was flowing down the sides of my face and completed with a fresh flower ornament Lily had handmade for me.

Last night, feeling as if only rouge dresses looked good on me, I boldly decided to try wearing a dress that had simply turned into a decoration for my closet after being tailored with a fabric that I fell in love with. Making use of the flowers in the courtyard, Lily made a hair ornament to go with it by herself, and pinned it to the back of my flustered head.

I headed to the hall escorted by Father.

Once we opened the door, the colorful lights and petals rained down on me. It was due to magic that these disappeared before hitting the ground, right after completing their task.

Right after, everyone's gaze fixed on me.

Shade, who had been nearby, widened his eyes, indicating surprise. Then, he showed praise by making a high-pitched whistle. It was rude, but it's an informal gathering, so I won't scold my younger brother.

With a smile of an accomplice, Lily exchanged glances with me, her hair adorned with a green rose — of course, matching mine— like our own secret sign.

Duke Ranunculas gave me words of praise and placed a gentle kiss on my hand as a greeting. With his grey moustache at the back of my hand, I felt ticklish, abashed, and of course, very happy.

And Wolf.

If I wasn't full of myself, then somehow, his eyes looked like it was smiling radiantly. He respectfully took over the role of escorting me from Father from then on.

Since Wolf just kept staring at me without opening his mouth, I flusteredly started the conversation myself.

"I'm actually aiming to be a lovely lady"

Wolf's blue-violet eyes smiled as he gave a soft, rare laugh.

"To my knowledge, I have yet to know a woman lovelier than you"

Since he said it so happily, the first thought that came to me, rather than getting flustered, was [I'm so lucky].

Even without looking in the mirror, I knew. That right now, I wore a smile that the game's Lycoris Radiata would've never had on.

The time of the game was ending, after this, was a world whose future was unknown to me.

Let's work hard to earn more friends.

I won't give up on Art's training.

I'll study to the max and have fun to the fullest for the remainder of my school life.

I'll have to think firmly about my future. For instance, I found teaching Lily a lot of things worthwhile and very enjoyable. It might be hard to become a school teacher, but maybe I could do something like volunteer.

And after that, I'll do my best at household training.

I'll cook tastier meals than Wolf's and impress Father and Shade as a start. It's plain to see that Lily was very good with her hands so I'll do whatever it takes for her to teach me handicrafts.

I should also be able to lend a hand in mediating a more intimate father-son conversation between Wolf and Duke Ranunculas.

I feel unease towards the uncertain future.

But by filling my heart further with hope, I'll walk on.

Character Tidbits & Afterwords

I got the ideas for the names of the main character of this story from poisonous plants.

LYCORIS RADIATA

Both her given name and surname is the technical name of cluster amaryllis. I hear “Lycoris” is also the name of a Greek mythology sea goddess.



Though the other names for cluster amaryllis like corpse flower, hell flower, ghost flower, razor flower are pretty wretched, I think it's an incredibly beautiful flower. There are a lot of different colors for it, but I like the red amaryllis by far.

By the way, in flower language it means things like “enthusiasm, independence, reunion, resignation, and “only thinking of you”“. It sort of fits her but it also sort of doesn't.

For her outward appearance, she has a mole under her eye, but may I know whether everyone remembers it? Depicting the appearance of the main character using first-person style is difficult, isn't it? I was supposed to be writing her with the assumption that she's a relatively glamorous beauty, but it didn't turn out the way I planned.

WOLFGANG EISENHUT

Eisenhut is about wolfsbane.* Wolf's bluish-purple eyes come from this color.



Wolfsbane seems to be also called “stepmother’s poison”. In ancient times, this is often used to kill the husband’s children from previous marriages in Rome or something like that. Scary. The episode, in which poison was served by the (aspiring) stepmother, came from there.

A yandere. But, at a level widely received, if at all possible, as the hero. I say, my trouble was that he’d been a difficult character. And truthfully, I think this person comes to help Lycoris way too much at the best timing (LOL), he probably always pays attention to everyone around Lycoris, huh?

SHADE

Belladonna’s English name originated from “deadly nightshade”. The name itself has a meaning of “shadow”.



Although a ripe belladonna's content contains poison, it is said to be sweet. This is how the concept of the character of a man who does this and that after inviting girls with sweet words, came to be. He's a womanizer, you know? May I know whether everyone remembers this setting? (Second time asking this)

Midway, I had an inkling that Shade faded away to simply becoming a siskon, but, his character was received quite favorably. He'd been very easy for me to write.

LILIAM VALLEY

Nickname: Lily

I wonder how many times I made the mistake because I questionably interchanged her name with Lycoris. Thank you very muchhh for all those who pointed out the mistakes. Though I remember feeling the burn of shame as I continued to make the same mistakes without learning from experience... Even though I've reread it, I still never notice that trap. The characters' names didn't resemble each other at all, I learned.



The “Lilium” in Lily’s name is about Yuri⁽²⁾, but Lily of the Valley = Valley of Yuris = “Suzuran”⁽³⁾ is her image. Speaking of which, the lily of the valley is an incredible cute flower, but its poison packs a strong wallop.

Actually, I initially planned Lily to shake off Lycoris’s hands until they were at the basement where Gift was— that is to say, until the last moment. Lily’s character was only supposed to change a little when Lycoris started to investigate Lily and Gift further, but in the end, her personality settled down to this.

It seems she became actively stronger at the end of this volume.

ARUTADO BRUGMANSIA

Nickname: Art

Brugmansia came from the scientific name of angel's trumpet. Arutad is Datura read in reverse. The meaning of Angel Trumpet in flower language are things like "charming and deceitful charm".



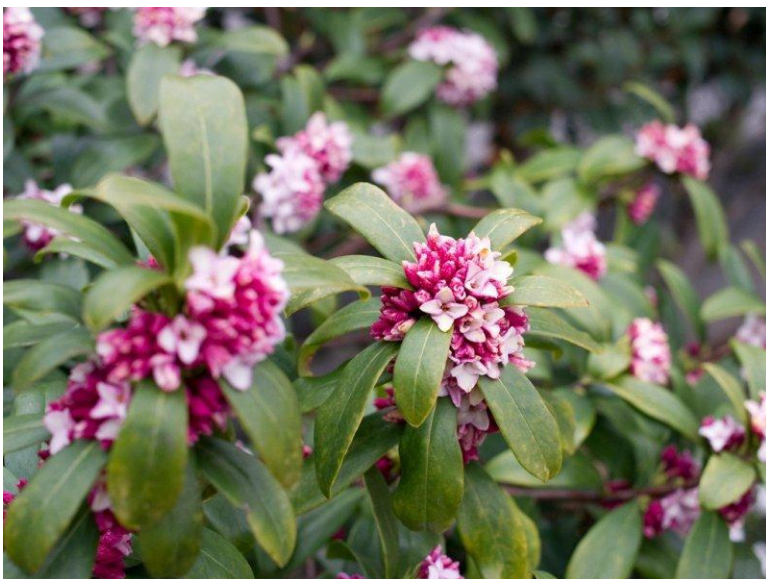
He might be a natural character to hate, but he's rather fun to write.

Since he's a character in the game, there's also a route where Art and Lily fell in love. Which means there's a happy ending with him that's not yandere.

Seriously worried about it, I thought "it would be a blessing (at least for Lily) if he's tamed by brainwashing him with hypnosis. As expected, it felt cruel, so I didn't allude to it in the story.

RU XIANG

His name is the Chinese name for Daphne.



Sorry for those who hoped he'd be a serious yandere. He had been a questionable gag member.

If Art's concept was a "harmful idiot", then Ru Xiang's concept was a "harmless pervert". He's not *completely* harmless, right? I wonder if he violated someone's portrait rights. Since Lycoris was in no mood to worry about it, she didn't butt in to who he used as the model for his dolls.

I was told by my sister, 'Because of Oria, he got pushed to the background, didn't he?'. (LOL) Certainly... he would've had more impact if he showed up alone. I also feel that I wanted to portray him with a rather hard personality a bit more.

ORIA

Only this character had a name with no relation to a plant or a poison. He was added on the spot.

He's a living punch-line that's related to the story's overall mystery(?). Honestly, what did you think about the punch-line? Something like, 'he's difficult to understand!', or, 'what's up with this punch-line!', if you give me your opinions, I'll sincerely accept.

In short, Oria reincarnated into modern day Japan and made the Yandere otome game, fully integrating his interests, using Lily as the protagonist... for all we know, *maybe*? In that case, he would've used Wolf's lines "I'd rather kill you now" that he learned in his past visions as the catch phrase. Maybe Lycoris-san should've been more angry at him.

But, if Lycoris got angry and Oria gave up making the game, the future (or is it the past?) would end up changing... Ahh, so bothersome.

GIFT

His name means "poison" in German. In English, it means "innate talent".

Truthfully, his guard, Mr. Hemlock was a descendent of his sister who married into a distant family... well, there was that setting, but since it didn't appear in the work, it's the same as not happening at all, right? Yup.

Extra:

UNCLE NARCISSUS RANGURUSTE

Narcissus is read as “Nárkissos” in English. ⁽⁴⁾

It's about daffodils, but I have to make it known that it means “narcissism” more than anything.



One way or the other, I was able to complete the story. Without a doubt, it's all thanks to everyone who read the story and occasionally provided their opinions and reviews. Every time I updated the story, I would think, “Is this good enough to publicize to other people?” and feel self-conscious, but I'm actually glad that I made up my mind to post it now.

These sites, [Let's be a novelist(小説家になろう)] [Read novels(小説を読もう)] are very wonderful, aren't they? Maybe it's because I see everyone's reactions. It's been an emotional rollercoaster, but I think I finished this story without losing interest thanks to that.

I plan to gradually write extra volumes after this. I wonder if it would be the easiest to understand if I update with similar pages as the normal volumes? Or, should I create a page to use for the extra volumes without messing the normal ones? I'll observe and study different ways of doing it.

I don't know how many I can live up to, but if you don't mind, kindly let me know if you have a request like “this is the kind of extra volumes I want to read” or something. If you have a character or a scene you like to see, please let me know and I'll dance from joy at the opposite end of the PC.

Later.

Translator notes:

(1) Eisenhut is the German word for Wolfsbane. Though the author didn't state it out here.

(2) Yuri (百合) = Liliun in Japanese

(3) Suzuran (スズラン) = Lily of the Valley in Japanese

(4) Narcissus in the original Japanese katakana was Nashisasu. I've been reading it like that too. >.<

Formal Character Introductions

Firi: Warning, there are kind of spoilers(?) for the next arcs. So if you want to avoid them, please do not read the section under Stage Ghost Capriccio until they show up.

For people who've forgotten the characters' names.

I've sort of included the characters that have names one after another regardless of whether or not they'll appear henceforth. There is a great deal of spoilers ahead.

Lycoris Radiata

The heroine of the story. She'd been Japanese in her previous life and had reincarnated into a fantasy world where magic exists. She holds memories of her past life. Her magical forte is memory enhancement.

Wolfgang Eisenhut

Lycoris's fiancé. He holds the title of viscount.
A person clothed in black.
His magical forte is combat specialization.

Shade

Lycoris's step-brother.
A person with red eyes.
His magical forte is bewitchment.

Lilium Valley (Lily)

The game's heroine.
Her magical forte is healing. But she is a strong all-rounder even in offense.

Arutad Brugmansia (Art)

A person with blonde hair.
His magical forte... well, it would be nice if he'd had an art, wouldn't it? No pun intended. ⁽¹⁾

Ru Xiang

A person clothed in white.

His magical forte is something I plan on writing in due time.

Oria

A person who is Ru Xiang's escort.

The person who'd make the yandere otome game if he'd been reborn.

Kaffir Radiata

Lycoris's father. The duke of Lilia.

Prime Minister-sama

Wolfgang's father. The duke of Ranunculas and the kingdom's prime minister.

It first came out in the book, but his name is Berus.

The origin of his name comes German reading of Cerberus, [Zerberus], which was deeply associated with aconite.

Solana Brugmansia

Art's elder sister. A mega beauty.

Art's siblings are all good-looking.

Viola Atleid ⁽²⁾

A female student with blonde vertical rolls. The same year as Lycoris.

The origin of her name comes from violette (Viola). She is a beauty with violet eyes.

Characters that appeared in the [Fiance arc]

Robinia

A person that attempted to poison Wolf.

Characters that appeared in the [Family arc]

Narcissus Ranguruste

Lycoris's uncle and Kaffir's brother in law. Shade's father.

Maris Ranguruste

Mrs. Ranguruste, who sort of had a name but it had missed the chance to appear.

Crinum Ranguruste

Narcissus's daughter and Lycoris's cousin. Shade's elder sister from a different mother.

Characters that appeared in the [School arc]

Gift Assis

A person with blue hair. A green eyed monster.
The mummy of the demon king or a stalker bird.

Characters that appeared in [The stage ghost's capriccio]

Miria Galant

A stage actress

Galant comes from the technical name of snowdrop, [Galanthus].

Snowdrop in flower language is "hope, consolation, love's first gaze" ⁽²⁾

A lovable yandere was her theme, but she ended up becoming a slightly troublesome girl. She doesn't have enough ability.

Elius Clark

A playwright.

Clark came from [Crocus]. It means a lot of things in flower language, but his character is especially close to the image "love again".

It was pretty cheeky how he succeeded as a playwright by using his broken heart as nourishment.

If the characters increase, I'll continue to insert them here.

⁽¹⁾ Mhmm, had to force out a pun to show the meaning to this. The not!pun came from the japanese text, which reads:

Tokui mahou wa... aru to ii ne.

(His magical forte... it would good if he had one (a magical forte))

Where "aru to" seems like a play of his name, Art.

⁽²⁾ Tried to research about the flower and I found many that reference the first two meanings of the flower but not the last. If anyone knows what the last meaning "first gaze of affection/love" is about, please share.

Extra SS

I saw a dream where I became a cat

I'd woken up from a short nap and turned into a cat.

When I felt the sunlight on my cheeks, I'd flusteredly cried out, "Haa-! I'll get scolded by Nanny if I get a sunburn!" and jumped to my feet. As I did so, what caught my eyes were, what I should've earlier been sleeping on, my arms.

No matter how I look at it, it was now that of a small black cat's.

[Ha?]

The surprised voice that emitted from my mouth came out as a delicate cat-like cry.

I was simply baffled. And while I was like that, a voice called out.

"...What's wrong?"

I felt relief almost reflexively when I heard the familiar voice from somewhere nearby.

Whatever the situation was, as long as Wolf was there, it would be fine. It seems my head had decided that of its own accord.

[Well, right now, you see]

What came out of my mouth as I tried vigorously to tell him the situation were things like "fu-nya" or "i-nyaa".

It's no good... this isn't fine at all.

What the heck? What the heck?, I asked, befuddled, while Wolf's hands gently stroked my head... wait! Large! His hands were large enough that it could easily grab hold of my skull! Scaryy!

Panicking, I placed distance from the gigantic hand, and what I saw over there was certainly Wolf's form.

Wolf? Or should I say, Wolf (L)...?

For now, I placed some distance from Wolf(L) and tried to grasp the situation.

Motionlessly, I looked at my hands.

It was the hands of a cat.

I was a black cat. Even my paws, though sort of pink, were faintly black.

With these hands, I couldn't even pinch my cheeks.

I looked relentlessly at my surroundings.

As it stands, I was in a familiar room. I'm at Wolf's private room at the Duke Ranunculas residence.

Given that I'd been in my home — my own room at the Duke Lilia residence, when I had my afternoon nap, I really have no idea how I ended up intruding into their home, let alone into Wolf's private room.

I give up, I don't know why or how it happened at all. For now, if I had to verbalize the present situation, then, for some reason, I, Lycoris Radiata, was in the form of a cat and in my fiancée's, Wolfgang Eisenhut's, room. Atop an elegant desk.

(What does this mean, what does th- ah, could I have just imagined waking up? Am I still in a dream?)

With the possibility that came to mind, I felt the sense of crisis sweep away from my brain.

(...eh? What's with this oversimplified way of thinking)

I think I'm normally someone who thinks a little more about things. Yet, simply thinking right now feels like a hassle. Was it because I'm a cat?

My rational side was probably trying hard to grasp the situation. But my instincts that got eroded by my feline side were telling me, [Oh well~ isn't this fine?~ it's just a dream anyway~~], and had wanted to yield to that half-hearted conclusion... I don't suppose I'm going to plunge to a level where my instincts will eventually end up winning over my rational side = a level where even my thoughts will turn into a cat or something, right?

When I was losing my wits, I turned to my dependable fiancé, Wolf, to ask what I should do and—

He'd long taken his eyes off me and was penning down official documents on the table.

Well, I don't think that was unreasonable.

I mean, who in the world could've imagined that before he knew it, the cat right in front of him would turn out to be his fiancé?

Rather, a Wolf who ended up filling his mind with such fantasies was someone I'd ha... actually, I guess I wouldn't particularly hate that. If Wolf was thinking such a thing under that serious expression of his, it wouldn't be what I'd expect, but it would be cute.

In any case, I have no intention of criticizing Wolf. In terms of my rational side, that is.

But my body was honest.

Before I knew it, the black cat that was me had pretty much taken spot on top of the documents that Wolf was engrossed with.

How should I put this? The me right now couldn't forgive Wolf for ignoring me and working on the documents.

These documents don't happen to be important, right? Sorry Wolf, don't get angry, ok? Even as I thought these, my black tail shamelessly hit Wolf's arm. Since I had fur, it felt more like a [fwapp] than a [whack], though.

I heard laughter from above. Fortunately, Wolf wasn't angr—.

“...what a naughty child”

What did he say?

‘...What a naughty child’?

Naughty child?

Notti chaildo?

Not-ti chail-do?

Just now, with that gentle and sweet voice, Wolfgang Eisenhut said that!

What’s this, so thrilling!

Even though I was a little surprised, his gentle wry smile, along with his scolding of [naughty child] was very thrilling !

My ears... my ears are melting...

Eh? Don’t tell me, would Wolf scold his child this way if he causes mischief? So jealous! I’m so jealous of Wolf’s child!

[One more time! One more time!]

Somehow putting a little strength on my hind legs to stand up, I desperately pressed both forepaws trying to clap as I matched with calls of [one more time]... rather, that was what the calls were supposed to be, but of course, words like that did not come out.

It didn’t get through to him, though. Furthermore, Wolf’s finger stroked me under the chin. It did feel good, though. I wasn’t expecting it, but I felt bliss despite the whole ‘turning into a cat’ thing...

Like this, I let go of my relatively simple rationality–

When I felt the sunlight on my cheeks, I’d flusteredly cried out, “Haa-! I’ll get scolded by Nanny if I get a sunburn!” and jumped to my feet. As I did so, what caught my eyes were my own familiar arms. I seem to have dozed off near the window of my room.

It feels like I saw some sort of fun dream, but I can't really remember what it was about.

For some reason, I had a strong urge to think, "I really want to see Wolf". It was that sort of peaceful afternoon.

Author's Notes:

An "it was all a dream" story. It's almost like saying Lycoris's excitement was "burning up" but it's probably the author who's actually burning up with excitement.

It's been a while. I'm starting off with this kind of one-shot but I'm glad that I could deliver the extra arc.

Afterwards, I plan to upload the extra arcs in regular order, but given the publication commemoration, which is almost like the [preliminary], please excuse me as I'll probably update irregularly for around 1 – 2 weeks.

By the way, the images below are [what would happen if she encountered other characters as a cat].

Shade → Lycoris would be an elder sister who'd keep playing until she drops with her younger brother, who's bad at handling small weak animals. "What a pesky little animal... Well, I wonder if that person will be pleased?" → Taking her away by the nape of the neck.

Father → an expert in all the ways of carrying and stroking. With a sweet voice, she'd get praised highly for being lovely.

Prime Minister-sama → he isn't remarkable in the ways of carrying or stroking, but the cat (Lycoris) would have a huge grin when she's with him. If he tried to leave, she'd have a downhearted look that seemed to say, "you're going already...?". Overloading him with cuteness.

Art → The moment Lycoris sees his figure, she'd run away with all her might.

Ru Xiang → He'd be eager to pet an animal. If he ever timidly tried to approach her, Lycoris would wait for him.

Lily → "Wow, how cute. It looks just like Lycoris", or something. She's very sharp. Lycoris's form actually changed through magic... if a situation like that ever happened, Lily would be the most dependable.



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